



# JEEVADHARA

## INTEGRATED RELIGIOUS LIFE AND INTEGRAL FORMATION

---

Edited by

Selva Rathinam

PROCESSED

APR 23 2015

GTU LIBRARY

Vol. XLV 2015

ISSN 0970 - 1125

No. 266

# **JEEVADHARA**

is published every month  
alternately in English and Malayalam

## **FOUNDER EDITOR**

**Joseph Constantine Manalel**

## **ASSOCIATE EDITOR**

**Kuncheria Pathil**

## **SECTION EDITORS**

### *Social Concerns*

**Felix Wilfred**

**Sunny Maniyakupara**

### *Word of God*

**Selva Rathinam**

**George Edayadiyil**

### *The Living Christ*

**Jacob Parappally**

**Saji Mathew Kanayankal**

### *Communion of People*

**Kuncheria Pathil**

**Tony Neelankavil**

### *Harmony of Religions*

**Vincent Sekhar**

**Vincent Kundukulam**

### *Fullness of Life*

**Mathew Illathuparampil**

**Mathew Paikada**

## **Secretary**

**P.U. Abraham**

# *jeevadharma*

A JOURNAL FOR SOCIO-RELIGIOUS RESEARCH

---

## **Integrated Religious Life and Integral Formation**

Edited by:

**Selva Rathinam**

Malloossery P. O.,

Kottayam - 686 041

Kerala, India

Tel: (91) (481) 2392530, 2397017

Mob: 9495519775

E-mail: [jcmanalel@gmail.com](mailto:jcmanalel@gmail.com)

Web: [www.jeevadhara.org](http://www.jeevadhara.org)

## CONTENTS

Editorial	5
Rooted in Christ to be His Emissaries: A Renewed Vision for Consecrated Life	7
<i>Fabian</i>	
Consecrated Religious Life as a Contrast Society: Pieris' Perspective	32
<i>Helen Dantis</i>	
Globalization and Democracy: A Prophetic Call and Challenge to Religious Life	46
<i>Selva Rathinam</i>	
Discipleship in the Hebrew Bible	51
<i>James B. Dabhi</i>	
Integrated Theological Formation Human/Personal, Intellectual, Spiritual and Pastoral	66
<i>Philip Vysanethu</i>	
Integral Theological Formation for Apostolate of Tomorrow in the Light of Vatican II	75
<i>Selva Rathinam</i>	



## Editorial

Christianity is a historical religion built on the life of Christ's birth, death and resurrection. We believe that Christ is alive today through his Resurrection. This faith in the Resurrection of Jesus helped many to walk the path of Christ and overcome a number of hurdles. As we enter as consecrated persons into this Postmodern Age we face the challenges of Postmodern era in our consecrated life with regard to our faith and a way of life.

The passion story in Mark 14:3-9 is introduced with the story of the woman anointing Jesus. The woman anoints Jesus and Jesus becomes the anointed one, the Messiah. Thus, the woman gives dignity to Jesus Christ and prepares him for his burial. Here we see the spiritual insight of the woman in contrast to the spiritual blindness of the religious leaders. Anointing Jesus with such expensive oil prepared from a rare nardian plant looks silly and worthless action for those who are outside the liberation story. But Jesus values it most! Our consecrated life resembles the anointing at Bethany. The lifelong commitment of consecrated life with its adherence to Evangelical Counsels appears to be silly and worthless act for many who value the secular life of comforts and luxuries. Thus, the consecrated life, at times, becomes the butt of jokes for the secular humanists and atheists. But in the eyes of God we receive the same affirmation as the woman at Bethany received from Jesus.

Now, who is this God we are talking about? In the secular Postmodern World the transcendent God has become impersonal, irrelevant and meaningless and is replaced with down to earth 'Jesus ethic.' Jesus ethic is human centric rather than religion centric. This calls for deconstruction of religious life where our commitment to the believable will point towards the conviction of the unbelievable. In

deconstruction the binary opposition crumbles. The periphery is brought to the centre and the centre to the periphery. What has become of consecrated life in its historical binary development? Power, prestige, wealth, caste, colour, culture, post and politics have become the centre of consecrated life. In deconstruction of binary opposition these should be pushed to the periphery and elimination bringing in the values of historical Christ to the centre of consecrated life, the values such as "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self control" (Gal 5:22).

Therefore, we have chosen in this issue the theme of "Integrated Religious Life and Integral Formation for Today." In her essay, Sr. Fabian focuses her attention on the Consecrated women and emphasizes that in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century the religious are called to renew the face of the world through a mystical-prophetic role. In her essay Dr. Helen Dantis explores the 'contrast' nature of consecrated religious life from the perspective of Aloysius Pieris, the Sri Lankan Jesuit Theologian. In his essay Dr. Selva Rathinam looks back to the civil movements led by Jeroboam in King Solomon's time and by Anna Hazare in recent time in India and concludes that globalization and democracy today can become a prophetic call and challenge to religious life. Religious life is often understood as discipleship, the discipleship of following Jesus more closely. Dr. Jimmy Dabhi in his essay deals with the discipleship in the Hebrew Bible to bring out the meaning of discipleship as the holistic following of the master. In the last two essays Drs. Philip Vysanethu and Selva Rathinam elaborate the integral theological formation needed for the integrated Religious Life.

I thank sincerely all those who have contributed articles to this issue. My special thanks to Royston Madtha, the Karnataka Jesuit Deacon who helped me in preparing the manuscripts. It is hoped that these articles may help us deepen our understanding and relevance of Consecrated Religious Life and its challenging formation in our country today.

Dr. Selva Rathinam

President

Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth (JDV)

Pontifical Institute of Philosophy and Religion

Pune 411 014, India



# **Rooted in Christ to be His Emissaries: A Renewed VISION for Consecrated Life**

**Fabian**

## **Introduction**

Every human being is created in the image and likeness of God. The purpose of our existence in the world is to live our life in its fullness and to glorify our creator through our joy-filled life. This is our vision and mission in this created world. Ken Blanchard understands the vision and mission in the following words:

Vision without action is merely a dream  
Action without Vision is passing the time  
Vision with action can change the world.

In order to transform the world, the Lord has called men and women who are capable of transmitting his love to his people through the radical path of consecrated life. In the process of following him closely, at times in life we have lost the trail of being rooted in him and to be his messengers of love and peace to his people. Today, the Lord is inviting all consecrated men and women to renew the vision and mission of our way of life which we have dedicated to Christ in total freedom. As consecrated persons, especially as consecrated women we have a great mission in the 21<sup>st</sup> century to renew the face of the world, society and the church through our mystical and prophetic role as emissaries of Christ, being rooted in him. As this reflection unfolds let us journey to the source of our consecrated life, the unconditional love manifested in the person of Christ and his love for his people as an emissary of God.

## **Journey to the Divine Source**

In a world that is rapidly changing under the impact of modernity and globalization, consecrated life, too, is going through a period of profound transition and transformation.<sup>1</sup> There is a deep groaning in

the hearts and minds of each consecrated person today, that individually and collectively we are missing something that which we are supposed to acquire. We are challenged with a strong invitation to return to the foundation of our lives that is to have very personal relationship with the person of Christ as mystics and undying love for his people, by being prophets or emissaries of God. If we are not rooted in Christ as genuine God seekers and God gives our existence will be a mere meaningless survival in this challenging world.

If we ask ourselves how we should begin the immense task of the renewal of the vision and mission of the consecrated life we cannot do better than listen again to the Church in Council calling us to "a continuous return to the source of all Christian life", not only to the Charism of our founders, but specially to the Gospel, which is the 'fundamental norm in our following of Christ and for us the supreme law'.<sup>2</sup> Further, the Decree on *Perfectae Caritatis* made a significant contribution to the renewal of consecrated life.

One of its main contributions was defining renewal in terms of return to the sources: Scripture, the Church's tradition as well as the founding inspiration and sound traditions of the institute. Secondly, return to the sources should be in accordance with the signs of the time, that is, in dialogue with the contemporary world.

Consecrated life which is an integral part of the ecclesial reality looks towards the emerging new horizon by reading the signs of the time, with a desire to fulfill its role in a relevant manner in this world that is caught up in the throes of a radical transformation. For this we need to go back to the source of our existence in the world which will enable us to contribute our share in this process of transformation of the world and the church.<sup>4</sup> Today, the church is inviting us today, to return to the source of our lives by being rooted in Christ, as authentic God seekers and compassionate emissaries of God to respond to the signs of the contemporary world. The revival in consecrated life is accessible once we are fully rooted in Christ.

### **1.1. Rootedness in Christ**

Karl Rahner affirms explicitly that "the root of all consecration goes back to the fundamental orientation of every human being to God and his or her ultimate End: It is this fundamental orientation which makes



possible the self- transcendence of a free and total commitment in faith to that same supreme Goal of existence".<sup>5</sup> As we have began our life in the Lord we must continue our journey in the Lord and designed to reach him.

The Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata* begins with the definition that "Consecrated Life, deeply rooted in Christ in the example and teachings of Christ the Lord, is a gift of God the Father to His Church through the Holy Spirit".<sup>6</sup> Therefore, we need to journey back to the source of our existence and get connected to the origin to live a life worthy of our call that is to follow Jesus. Pope Francis calls our attention by inviting us for a renewed relationship with the person of Christ:

The Lord does not disappoint those who take this risk; whenever we take step towards Jesus, we come to realize that he is already there, waiting for us with open arms. "Now is the time to say to Jesus: "Lord I have let myself be deceived; in a thousand ways I have shunned your love, yet here I am once more, to renew my covenant with you. I need you. Save me once again, Lord make me once more into your redeeming embrace."<sup>7</sup>

Once we realize that we belong to the Lord at any time, and any place we are invited to return to him and he will accept us unconditionally. Then, nothing will be able to separate us from the love of Christ as Paul exclaimed "Who shall separate me from the love of Christ? Will it be trials, or anguish, persecution or hunger, lack of clothing, or dangers or sword?"(Rm.8:35). We must remain linked to this unfathomable love of Christ and not to run after the worldly realities of name, fame, possession and position which provides only temporary meaning and happiness in our lives. We need to be persons who are immersed in God's love and rekindle the flame of all encompassing love, to light our torches once again from the Source of Light which is Christ himself.<sup>8</sup> In Christ, through Christ, with Christ the renewed vision and mission of the consecrated life is possible in today's exigent world and this relationship with Christ will pave the way for the closeness to other human beings.

### **1.2. Seeing Christ in Others**

The rootedness in the person of Christ as a mystic leads the consecrated persons to be human and to build good relationship with every person whom we meet, to love and serve, as Jesus was rooted

in his *Abba* and close to everyone. Jesus whole life and teaching was summarized in these two great commandments, the love of God and humans. He said; "Now I give you a new commandment: love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (Jn 13:34-35). Loving others is the concrete actualization of one's love for God.<sup>9</sup> One of the earliest century monks Abba Antony said, "Our life and our death are with our neighbor. If we gain our brother, then we have gained God; but if we have scandalized our brother, then we have sinned against Christ". Abba Appollo said, "When you see your brother, you have seen the Lord your God". The mystical experiences of the divine should lead us closer to others in a spirit of love and service.<sup>10</sup> The strong bond of love of the consecrated men and women for the people of God, as disciples of Jesus, must help us to set an example for the whole world like Jesus.

Today, the entire world is glad about Pope Francis as the one who practices human values and qualities with dignity and courage. In the recent history no Pope has made such an impact on people all over the world like Pope Francis.<sup>11</sup> His deep rootedness in the person of Christ has strengthened him to love and welcome everyone to the church from all walks of life. In 'Light and Truth' Jacob Parappally has drawn our attention to Pope Francis:

Amidst the experience of despair and hopelessness due to war and violence, poverty and misery, fundamentalism and hostility to religious faith, there are sublime values of humanness and simplicity, compassion, care for others, respect and self-emptying love. These enduring values find expression in the attitudes, life-style, behavior and relationships of the Pope Francis.<sup>12</sup>

Drawing inspiration from Jesus the compassionate savior and keeping him as the centre of his heart, Pope Francis is setting the clear goals today for the disciples of Jesus to break the boundaries which exists among the nations, churches, societies, families, religious communities and individuals. As consecrated men and women we need to love, identify, mingle and come closer to the people of God, then the renewal in consecrated life will be attainable. We will be able to love others closely when we have good relationship with ourselves.



### ***1.3. Fullness of life in Christ***

Jesus experienced the fullness of life in his beloved *Abba* and celebrated the fullness of life in Him. We, who are created in the image and likeness of God, need to recognize our self worth in God and need to celebrate God's existence in us by finding joy and fulfillment. In John 10:10 Jesus said; "I have come they may have life, life in its fullness". The truth that Jesus became human for our sake came to give us life is a clear example that his indwelling presence is constantly with us, within us and we need to confide in his love. The love of the self is unfolded through the person of Christ is fundamental to our emotional and spiritual health. This inspire us to love our neighbors as ourselves (Lev 19:18; Mt 22:39). For some of us it is quite easy, to love ourselves because we have been brought up in such a way that we have developed a deep sense of self-worth. For others love of self is quite difficult because of their past experience.<sup>13</sup> One of the ways in which we grow in love of our selves is by watching over our thoughts. As John Izzo points out:

They say that we are what we eat, but from a spiritual point of view, we are what we think. Human beings have an average of 45,000-55,000 thoughts per day, a veritable nonstop inner conversation. We all talk to ourselves all day long. Most of our thoughts are benign, but many of them have a large impact on how we see ourselves. <sup>14</sup>

Hence, it is very important that we constantly feed ourselves with positive thoughts and grow in genuine appreciation and affection for ourselves.<sup>15</sup> As consecrated men and women we need to be happy with ourselves and if we are not, we cannot share our fullness of joy and being with others. We see in Luke 6:38 Jesus is inviting us to share our having and being with others, "Give and it will be given to you, and you will receive in your sack good measure, pressed down, full and running over. For the measure you give will be the measure you receive". The measure of abundance that we can give to others is to be kind, compassionate, friendly, available, approachable, joyful, honest, integral, just and fair in our dealings with others and above all blessing others through our prayerful support. In the process of self realization we need to realize our unworthiness and inadequacy. This will fashion



us to feel our total dependency on God and also it will make us humble before others. As the followers of Jesus let us deepen our rootedness in him and become his true emissaries by accepting ourselves as we are, with all our goodness and weaknesses. When Moses was asked by God to go to Egypt, to liberate the people of Israel he expressed his inability to God; "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the people of Israel out of Egypt?" (Ex 3:11) Then God replied "I will be with you" (Ex 3:12). In a similar manner Mother Mary, Isaiah, Jeremiah and many other prophets, saints and mystics expressed their unworthiness and inability to carry out God's plan in their lives. When they articulated their difficulty God blessed them with fullness of life, renewed energy and inner wisdom. Rootedness in Christ, others and oneself will lead us to get more connected to cosmos.

#### ***1.4. Finding God in Cosmos***

God has shaped the world with much love and tenderness. He has revealed this profound love for the world by sending his only Son Jesus to the world. Jesus in his deep personal union with *Abba* saw the whole creation as the sanctuary of His beloved *Abba*. The love of the Father opened up a new way of relating to the creation, by appreciating it and by inviting the disciples to learn from it. This we view it in the Gospels, when Jesus enlightened the disciples to look at the birds of the air, lilies of the field, wine and the branches, mustard seed, light and many other examples vividly expresses it.

Many mystics and monks celebrated their life by looking at the creation and by getting connected to it in prayer. One of the earlier monks when he saw the desert for the first time he said, "I love it". Though they lived inside the monastery they loved the creation of God. In the nature they were able to see God, hear God, and live with God. Therefore, God experience and earth experience went hand in hand. They had to depend upon the trees and plants for their food and medicine and to make handicrafts like baskets, mats, dresses etc. Therefore, they were careful to nurture, guard and had communion with it.<sup>16</sup> Later on St. Benedict adopted in his rules on creation spirituality to express his love for the creation. For him choral prayer is praising the Creator God in union with the entire creation. For him we meet God even in the kitchen utensils, for he seems to have said "all things are full of God's spirit."<sup>17</sup>

There are many saints and mystics who loved the creation of God passionately and saw the face of God in it, especially Francis of Assisi. Nobody taught Francis to love birds and the flowers, the rocks and the forests, the sun and the moon, and to treat them all as his brothers and sisters. His gentleness and tenderness toward all creatures, including human beings and especially the poor and the lepers flowed quiet naturally from his experience of oneness with God. He experienced himself as intimately one with all of God's creatures.<sup>18</sup>

In this 21<sup>st</sup> century when we look around the world and especially in our India what do we see? Destruction of the creation of God by rapid cutting down of whole forests, indiscriminate mining, atmospheric pollution, industrial poisoning of air and water, toxic wastes, lack of clean drinking water, absence of basic hygiene, deprivation of large masses of our people of basic health care. These destructions are inviting us to listen to the cry of the universe which God has created with much love.

Today, there is a great mission before us, to transform the world by challenging the people who destroy the creation of God by voicing out as prophets through the different ways of conscientization. Today, we need to show ever more effective ecological solidarity in our spiritual, communal and apostolic lives. Care for the environment affects the quality of our relationship with God, with other human beings and with creation itself which will lead us to renew the vision and mission of the consecrated life today. When our life is filled with love for God, others, oneself and Creation we become witness of his life giving presence.

## **2. Relevance of the Vows:**

### **To be the Emissaries of Christ's Love**

In the life of every human being there are three basic drives; to love and to be loved, to possess and to appropriate our will. By committing ourselves to Christ through the three evangelical councils of chastity poverty and obedience, we are transcending our basic needs in freedom and love, to follow Jesus more closely, to love him very dearly and to know him more clearly. Rooted in his love we become emissaries of joy, love and peace to his people. Let us have a deeper look in to the relevance of the vows today.

## ***2.1. Chastity: For Building Relationships***

Jesus in his intimate relationship with his *Abba* lived a life of relationship with himself, others and whole creation. He expressed the feelings of warmth, affection, affirmation and deep love for God, people and creation. He experienced celibate intimacy with the entire humanity in his life especially on the cross as he was united with every one, through his unconditional love and forgiveness. The evangelical vow of chastity invites us to fall in love with Christ with an undivided heart (cf. 1 Cor 7:32-34).<sup>19</sup> Far from being a dry, negative, frustrating virtue; it is a glorious positive power, the secret of sanity and sanctity of all who dedicate themselves completely to Christ.<sup>20</sup>

For many years chastity was associated with sex. Human sexuality had a very negative connotations and impact on consecrated people. Today, consecrated persons have rediscovered the spiritual implications, new understanding of human sexuality and takes steps to ensure that the process of sexual unfolding remains holistic and liberating.<sup>21</sup> We need to realize that we are sexual beings and we have our feelings, emotions and desires which seek to give appropriate expression to our sexuality through healthy relationships and friendships. In this context the vow of celibacy is given a new name, the vow of relatedness. The vow of relatedness demands that the consecrated persons develop their capacity to relate warmly and lovingly with other human beings like Jesus in inner freedom and love.<sup>22</sup> Love of the followers of Jesus is a call to love universally and unconditionally as emissaries of God by reaching out to all human kind in loving relationships. Living a celibate life opens our hearts and minds, to be happier and joy full, more human, more loving, more understanding, and more compassionate like Jesus.

## ***2.2. Poverty: For Being Solidarity with the Poor***

Jesus undivided love for his *Abba* enabled him to live a simple life in solidarity with the poor and the marginalized. He chose to be poor in order to make us rich and to be at the side of the poor. The poor includes today, all those who feel deprived of meaning, dignity, and purpose in their lives: these are materially rundown, victims of injustice, the marginalized, the rejected, old people, the unemployed, refugees, the sick, the disoriented youth, abandoned children of the migrants.



Jesus acceptance of his *Abba* as the sole treasure which leads him to live in unconditional solidarity with the poor is the source of our vow of poverty. His poverty was part of his kenosis, his self-emptying; "for you know the generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich" (2 Cor. 8:9).

The vow of poverty invites the consecrated persons to proclaim that God is our real treasure<sup>23</sup> and to reach out to the poor in selfless love and service. As Paul says, "Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others" (Phi 2:4). The vow of poverty demands that the consecrated persons to live in solidarity with the poor, sharing their hopes and aspirations, their sufferings and their struggles. Whatever resources the community, congregations or individual has it must be put at the service of the downtrodden.<sup>24</sup> Pope Francis affirmed his love and concern for the welfare of the poor in the final address to the Synodal assembly on family:

This is the Church, that is not afraid to eat and drink with prostitutes and publicans; the Church that has the doors wide open to receive the needy, the penitent, and not only the just or those who believe they are perfect; the Church that is not ashamed of the fallen brethren and pretends not to see them, but on the contrary feels involved and almost obliged to lift him/her up and to encourage him/her to take up the journey again and accompany them toward a definitive encounter with her Spouse, in the heavenly Jerusalem.<sup>25</sup>

We need to discover the power of God in the powerlessness of the poor, because God's power becomes manifest when God becomes their liberator. United in *Abba*, Jesus fought against the demoniac forces which controlled the human persons especially the socially rejected and outcast. This vow also invites us to voice out and oppose the prevailing economic system that permits the concentration of wealth and power in the hands of a few, reducing large numbers of people to poverty and indigence. It is a cardinal principle of Catholic social teaching that the wealth of the world is meant for all human beings. "God intended the earth and all it contains for the use of every human being and people".<sup>26</sup> We need to be taught by the poor, and a perspective on

life from the side of the poor, the Church for the future will be a Church “of the poor” and not a Church “for the poor”.<sup>27</sup> In order to be rooted in him we need to choose a simple life style which will help us to have better relationships with the neglected brothers and sisters of the society.

### 2.3. *Obedience: For Growing in Human Dignity*

Obedience entails a full use of our listening capacity, the Latin term *ob audire* which means to listen attentively; that we remain always listening attentively to God, nature, events, circumstances, persons and community members and most importantly to one’s own inner voice.<sup>28</sup> It is a life lived with alertness or watchfulness to the Spirit (Mt 26:41). Speaking of the practice of obedience by the consecrated persons Vatican II says: “They follow the pattern of Jesus Christ, who came to do the Father’s will”.<sup>29</sup> He accomplished *Abba’s* will in inner freedom and unconditional love. Today, many consecrated men and women look upon the vow of obedience as a sacrifice of their freedom. In actual life only a free person can think and act normally. As J.M. Lorenzo points out:

Jesus does not speak of renunciation as a means to individual perfection. He does not speak of totally orienting our persons and our lives towards the kingdom of God and being ready to leave behind anything that might prove to be an impediment to our fidelity to this commitment. But he attaches no great importance to renunciation as a value in itself. And he surely never portrayed the renunciation of our will-let alone submission to another human being-as a value.<sup>30</sup>

Many modern consecrated persons fear that the practice of obedience goes against their dignity as human persons and prevents healthy development of their personality. Here it is good to recall the words of Vatican II that “liberty is strengthened through obedience”.<sup>31</sup> And the Council goes on to add that “religious obedience does not lessen the dignity of the human person but brings it to maturity through that greater freedom of the children of God”.<sup>32</sup> It is true to say that obeying God, our creator, and doing God’s will are not against our human dignity. Many centuries ago Saint Thomas Aquinas pointed out

that the precepts which Christ and the apostles gave are “very few”. And the precepts enjoined subsequently by the Church should be insisted upon with moderation “so as not to burden the lives of the faithful” and make our religion servitude, whereas “God’s mercy has willed that we should be free”.<sup>33</sup> As adult consecrated men and women sometimes we find it very difficult to obey. In order to make obedience easy for us Vatican II makes the following suggestions:

For this part, as one who will render an account for the souls entrusted to him (cf Heb 13:17), each superior should himself or herself be docile to God’s will in the exercise of their office. Let them use their authority in a spirit of service for their brothers and sisters, and manifest thereby the charity with which God loves them. Governing their subjects as God’s own sons and daughters, and with regard for their human personality, a superior will make it easier for them to obey gladly. Therefore, they must make a special point of leaving them appropriately free with respect to the sacrament of penance and the direction of conscience. Let them give the mind of leadership which will encourage religious to bring an active and responsible obedience to the offices they shoulder and the activities they undertake. Therefore, a superior should listen willingly to his or her subjects and encourage them to make a personal contribution to the welfare of the community and of the Church.<sup>34</sup>

The patriarchal understanding of authority involves the concentration of power in the hands of a few. This leads to the marginalization of many who are without power and have no opportunities to exercise responsibility. Deep within every human being there is a creative urge to make a contribution. “Only in a culture of mutual collaboration can this creativity be tapped, to the benefit of all creatures and to the mutual advancement of life in its evolutionary grandeur”.<sup>35</sup> The vow of mutual collaboration is not primarily about understanding and exercising authority in a new, egalitarian manner. “It is much more about a conversion of heart and mind that allows and enables us to see life differently with dignity and inner freedom”.<sup>36</sup> In atmosphere of inner freedom, and human dignity we will be able to accomplish God’s will fruitfully and effectively.



In a world running after for self-indulgence, sexual fulfillment, for insatiability and consumerist tendencies, for gross egoism and ascendancy, the values of chastity, poverty, and obedience lived by the consecrated religious are prophetic signs of freedom and communion today. The freedom we achieve through the evangelical councils should transform us to build communion of hearts wherever we are and whatever we do.

### 3. Emissaries of Communion in Communities

Today, we realize that the entire world is much more connected than before, due to globalization, fast transport and faster communication. Knowledge is available for free, in media and in net connections. We have our anonymous clubs on twitter, face book or other blogs. We are connected with lots more people than ever but our relationships are only for a short time and even pragmatic.<sup>37</sup>

At this context Jesus formation of a community in oneness with his *Abba* with all types of characters and behaviors inspire us to build communion of hearts in our communities in spite of our differences. In a world which has no time for God, with prayers and communion of hearts, our communities are called to stand as a beacon of light and as a power house in this competitive world. Our communities need to show the world that "More things are wrought by prayers than these world dreams of" (Tennyson).<sup>38</sup> As members of Christ, living together as brothers, and sisters consecrated persons should give pride of place in esteem to each other (cf. Rm 12:10) and bear each other's burdens (cf. Gal 6:2).

Building communion of hearts in the community is not only the task of the animator but every member of the community need to take initiative in building dialogue, respect for each other, sharing our daily life, our work and our prayer are essential for building communion of hearts in the communities. We must build up an atmosphere in which each one feel at home and in which we support and inspire one another, we need to eliminate in our communities worldliness, comfort seeking attitude, gossip, competitiveness, cultural domination and complacency. We need to encourage and foster a community atmosphere that promotes contemplation, communion, compassion, companionship, care,

concern, collaboration, communication, co-responsibility, reconciliation, mutual trust, respect, sacrifice and a sense of celebration.<sup>39</sup> Sometimes our communities turned out to be a place of militarism, place of fight, troubles, gossips and criticisms. These divide the communities and create disharmony among the members. At this context George Soares-Prabhu draws our attention through the actual struggles of our community life:

For with the stifling ritualism of our worship and the unbridled legalism of our canon law, with all our ecclesiastical careerism, our petty tyrannies, our delight in tinsel titles, and our unceasing clamor for our 'minority' rights, with our large neglect of the poor, our shoddy compromises with the powerful, our involvement at injustice, and our worship of wealth, we are, surely, far indeed from the dream that Jesus dreamed of a kingdom community.<sup>40</sup>

The important thing is that we do not stop walking, in spite of our struggles to live together, that we continue to be pulled by Jesus dream of community. And when our complacency and self-righteousness, our cynicism and our sloth, tempt us to put away the dream of Jesus, gently urging us to come to terms with hard reality, to lower our sights to a more realistic goal, then the voice of Jesus the prophet rings out, breaking into our apathy and summoning us to creative action and to renew our vision and mission in consecrated life through our community life. We must always be aware that our community is not only for the mission but the community itself becomes mission and this realization will open the door to live in communion of hearts by responding to the signs of the time together as prophets and emissaries. Let us have a glance at the context where we are living and how we need to be emissaries of Christ.

### **1. Prophetic Gawk: World, Indian Scenario**

Consecrated life will not be meaningful and fruitful unless it is lived out to the context like the prophets. Pope Francis reminds us; "The great danger in today's world, pervade as it is by consumerism, is the desolation and anguish born of a complacent yet covetous heart, the feverish pursuit of frivolous pleasures, and a blunted conscience".<sup>41</sup> We are living in a world which is in the throes of a threefold revolution:

a technological revolution, an economic revolution and communications revolutions. Humanity is finding difficult to cope with the rapid changes brought about by Science and Technology. Economic liberalization and Globalization has radically altered the context of our life. Satellite television and other mass media of communication are exposing us to a variety of world-views and moral standards. These are deeply disturbing the world at large.<sup>42</sup>

In India too we are affected by the various challenges. There is first of all enormous wealth in the hands of a few while majority of our people live in abysmal poverty. The rich are becoming richer while the poor are being further impoverished. What is worse, the State seems to be more and more working for the interests of the opulent and affluent. There is also multiplicity of religions, casts, languages and ethnic identities. Religious fundamentalism, communalism and dictatorships are raising their ugly head everywhere in India. Craving for possessions, profit, pleasures, power and positions is strong even among those who have pledged themselves to a life of simplicity, sacrifice and service. Upward mobility, success at all costs, cults of comforts and pleasures and fighting for positions and power are becoming common everywhere, even within the Church. Rapid industrialization, stupendous technological advance and increased education have created a strong middle class, with middle class values and aspirations. The Church is considered a foreign body by most of our country fellow beings.<sup>43</sup> Christians are even killed and persecuted by the people of our nation. Even within the Church, caste discrimination and gender discrimination are rampant.

The most painful reality of the Indian context is, a great majority of the Indian women continue to be silenced and suppressed, battered, bargained and burnt alive. The startling statistics of violence and rape reveal women's subjugation and objectified status in our society.<sup>44</sup> Millions of women are spending themselves toiling for the mere survival of their children and families. The girl child in particular is discriminated against and even killed in the mother's womb. The following question challenges at this context; "*Is anyone noticing the cry and violence against women in our nation?*" These prophetic challenges call us consecrated men women at this context to keep the flame alive and



turning and to reach out to the voiceless brothers and sisters of our society.

## **5. Response of the Consecrated Women to the Context as Emissaries of Christ**

Today, women are awakening to a new consciousness of who they are, claiming agency to the discovery of their true identity and personhood. This collective awakening of women is indeed a global experience cutting across the barriers of nation, race, color and creed. Women issues are becoming global concerns. In India too, today women are more increasingly seen and heard among politicians, entrepreneurs, professionals, activists and artists. More and more women are leading NGO's and People's movements. Moving beyond kitchens and child care centers, they have reached law courts, parliaments, top of Mount Everest, pilots, research scholars in laboratories and even outer space. Discovering the power within women are courageously making a breaking through into the space reserved for 'men alone' thus leading humanity to a new consciousness of being human.<sup>45</sup>

This is affecting the consecrated women in India too they are becoming more aware of their roles as mystics and prophets. The mighty force of consecrated women who are part of the oppressed group in the Indian society and Church can be architects in shaping a new society in India. There are no consecrated women in India who has not been or is not a victim of the varied gender based oppressive systems in the family, neighborhood, work place, Church or society. But our enslaving experience can become our spiritual energy by being rooted in Christ to be prophets to establish a new social order and an alternate society. As mystics and prophets we are called to invest our God-given energy, enthusiasm and talents in building a new society in India.<sup>46</sup> Being rooted in Christ and to be his emissaries we need to rise above our natural inclinations and listen to the cry of our brothers and sisters and recognize our power to build a better world, society, church and families.

## **5. Consecrated Women's Role in the Life of the Church in India**

Today, the global movements are affecting the entire humanity. These movements are leading the people to recognize their dignity and power. Similarly women are waking up to their inner strength to actualize

their power in the world, in the church and in the society. The consecrated women as the disciples of Jesus our strength is in the Lord who treated the women of his time with love and respect as consequence they became powerful emissaries of God. Drawing inspiration from the Lord the following dimensions will unfold the role of consecrated women in the Church in India today.

### ***6.1 Greater Inclusion in the Life of the Church***

Union with *Abba*, strengthened Jesus to reach out to the broken, downtrodden, lonely, the abandoned especially to the women and children of his time. Today, the life of Jesus is inspiring women in India for the call for a greater inclusion in the life of the Church, in its policy and decisions. The universal Church too is realizing its great responsibility towards women. The following statement was made by Pope John Paul II at the time of Beijing conference: "Women have often been relegated to the margins of society and even reduced to servitude. This has prevented women from truly being themselves and it has resulted in a spiritual impoverishment of humanity". In all humility he apologized to the women for the wrongs done to them and urged the church to make amends for these sins.<sup>47</sup> Pope Francis too is taking efforts to improve the status of women in the Church today. A clear example is; when he visited Manila, noted that four of the five people who addressed him on the stage were males and challenged the people who gathered there through the following words:

There is only a small representation of females here, too little. Women have much more to tell in today's society. At times we men are too 'machista using the Spanish term for male chauvinists. We don't allow room for women but women are capable of seeing things with a different angle from us, with a different eye. Women are able to pose questions that we men are not able to understand. Then he jokingly added: so, when the next pope comes to Manila, let's please have more women among you.<sup>48</sup>

The feminist's slogan '*we make policy, not coffee*' is perhaps beginning to be heard within the Indian ecclesial boundaries too.<sup>49</sup> In India for a long time women's voice were not heard, especially consecrated women have been passive recipients of spirituality,

understanding of Christian ethics and the pastoral vision. Today, they are questioning the monopolized leadership of the church which is masculine.<sup>50</sup> There is an urgent need for greater mutuality in mission, which implies working out new structures of collaboration at the parochial and diocesan levels and at the national and international commissions. More women need to be heard in the field of theological formation, spiritual direction, guiding retreats, counseling, leadership and more men in creative expressions of *daikonia*.<sup>51</sup>

At present all the power structures are male centered models in India and women find it impossible to fit into them, there is a need to understand those structures and critique with an empowered spirit. What are needed today, not competitive spirit and prejudice against men, not to prove who is right and who is wrong. But men and women together who are interested sincerely in the establishment of a new society to cooperate and collaborate with each other and work out means and ways to see new heaven and new earth through the renewed vision and mission.

## 5.2. *Empower oneself in Christ to Empower Others*

Jesus being one with *Abba* saw his Father's face in every one. He respected women, talked to them as individuals with spiritual understanding, and included some of them to be his disciples who followed him on his Galilean journeys and finally to Jerusalem and Calvary (Lk 8:31; 43:48)<sup>52</sup> For a renewed vision and mission of the consecrated life, it is the urgent call of the society, church in India and at the universal church at large, for a radical change in the empowerment of women. In order to uplift the downtrodden, the consecrated women need to be rooted in Christ. The power to empower others must spring from the deep God experience of oneself: When asked by journalists in England to Mother Teresa "What is your motivation, what inspired you to do all this?" she answered with one word, "Jesus".<sup>53</sup> Like Mother Teresa strengthened by the spirit of Jesus we need to play a prophetic role in our society and makes the church to realize its responsibility towards the women to empower themselves:

If the Church is to become the empowering symbol of communion, it must embark on new models of relationship and new forms of partnership. If the church is to become the



conscience of a new world order, it needs an alternate leadership that acknowledges women's potential and inner power, and recognizes the intellectual competence, charisms, and skills in order to actualize God's plan of fashioning a just society.<sup>54</sup>

Together with the church we need to believe in ourselves with dignity and power in our potentials. When we realize that 'we can' with the power of the Lord who has promised to be with us always, we get the inner energy, to work with compassion for the welfare of the poor and the needy. We the consecrated women need to be liberated from internalized norms of dependence, victimization, emotional manipulation, fear of insecurity<sup>55</sup> and crab mentality. Liberation will be possible for others, only if we consecrated women are liberated and empowered by the spirit of Christ. Thus empowered, joy filled witnessing presence of the consecrated women will become the channel of God's blessings to empower others, to establish God's Kingdom here on earth.

### 6.3 Joy filled Witness as Emissaries of Christ to Build the World

Jesus intimacy with *Abba* leads him to bear witness to him as his beloved Son. Even in the midst of many challenging situations Jesus never gave up the witnessing presence of his Father. We are called to follow our master Jesus and bear witness to him joyfully in the midst of all sorts of challenges in the world and especially in India. We need to enter into the world and need to be in solidarity with the world in all its experiences as Jesus was in solidarity with the humanity. The documents of the church *Gaudium et Spes* expects from all the Christians and especially from the consecrated men and women to be in solidarity with the world:

The joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the people of our time, especially of those who are poor or afflicted, are the joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well. Nothing that is genuinely human fails to find an echo in their hearts. For theirs is a community united in Christ and guided by the Holy Spirit in their pilgrimage towards the Father's Kingdom, bearers of the message of salvation for all humanity.<sup>56</sup>

This statement of the Council is experienced by the world and India as true, when Pope Francis express his views on the various agonizing

problems of this present time affecting the Church and the world, calling consecrated men and women for prophetic denunciation of all kinds of evils that destroys the harmony and communion among the humanity.<sup>57</sup> The world stands in need of liberation my Lord", as the hymn goes on, it offers the invitation to heal and transform our country and the world from the clutches of all sorts of evil through our love and peace, above all through our joy filled witnessing spiritual presence. We, consecrated women, ought to be bearers of Christ who is joy itself. People must see that we are truly joyful people, an "alleluia" people, whose joy is reflected in our joyful service for our brothers and sisters.<sup>58</sup>

Our presence will be effective in India if we are able to enter into a dialogue with people of all faiths by sharing our faiths, encouraging others to share their faiths by listening to them and accepting them as they are. Once someone asked Mother Teresa how could you become very effective in this pluralistic country India? She responded with a smile "I never tried to convert anyone, but tried to make Hindu a better Hindu, Christian a better Christian, Muslim a better Muslim, Sikh a better Sikh through my love and care, peace and joy". Yes, this is what is expected from us today in our country. Francis of Assisi told his fellow brethren "preach the Gospel always" and "if it is needed use the words". Through all our missionary activities of teaching, healing, preaching and education, we are called to make Christ present. Pope Francis expects witness in these words: "the witness that can be really attracted is that associated with attitudes which are uncommon: generosity, detachment, sacrifice, self-forgetfulness in order to care for others. This is the witness the martyrdom of consecrated life".<sup>59</sup>

Today there is no need to use the high tech-technique for the vocation promotion to draw the youngsters to consecrated life. Our joy filled, presence and service, need to be the guiding light for the people to experience God in their lives. When our light shines, people will see the good work we are doing and praise the Father in heaven [cf. Mt 5:16]. Instead of cursing the darkness let us light up and wake up the people of our nation and the world through our love, peace and joy filled witness. At this context I wish to recall the hymn of Tagore "Into that freedom my Father, my Mother, let every men and women of our country awake" as we continue to bear witness to Jesus through our faith, hope and love by being his emissary.

## 7. Consecrated Women:

### **Rooted in Christ to be His Emissaries in India Today**

United in deep, contemplative stillness with his *Abba*, the divine source, Jesus was saturated with divine energy and grasped his consequent mission as a prophet. He had his deepest experience of his Father when he became immersed in the sorrows of the grieving widow, when he met the paralytic at the pool, or the lepers who cried out to him from afar for healing. "In his fellow human beings he saw not sin and guilt but woundedness, brokenness, sickness, confusion and fear."<sup>60</sup> This Jesus is the model for us consecrated women in India today, as we continue our vision and mission to be his followers.

As Jesus was integrated with his *Abba* we need to cultivate passion for Christ and the compassion for the humanity. Otherwise, we cannot be effective in responding to the present day challenges of our country India. We need to listen to the movement of the spirit and read the signs of the time to understand the realities of our people in depth. Filled with the fire of Christ in our heart, we are called to walk through the lanes and by lanes, high rise buildings and slums, malls and pavements bazaars in India, mingling and interacting with the women and men, rich and poor, uppercast and lower caste.<sup>61</sup> Ablazed with love of Christ as prophets and the emissaries of God we need to discover him in the harassed wives and anxious mothers, in the insecurity of the girl child, in the traumas of raped and molested women, in the yearning of Indian women to be free from socio-cultural and religious shackles that bind them as slaves to oppressive customs and traditions.<sup>62</sup> As consecrated women prophetess, with complete trust and confidence in the power of Jesus as mystics, we need to enter into the life of our struggling brothers and sisters of our country, and very especially to the women and girl children.

In this context of India today, consecrated women have a prophetic task, to present dignity and beauty of genuine womanhood and so to contribute to an indispensable task in modern society. With great trust in the Lord and with a magnanimous heart, we need to break down the walls that exist between people, religion, culture and gender. We need to be an embodiment of God's presence for his people, through our God experience, love, compassion, self sacrificing spirit and enthusiasm.



The great women saints, mystics, prophets, emissaries and martyrs of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century of India; Alphonsa, Euphrasia, Mother Teresa, Rani Maria, Valsa John, and Vandanamatagi, inspire us to be rooted in Christ and to become his emissaries. Let us imbibe their spirit to follow the Lord and to become his true mystics and prophets in our country India.

## **8. Renewed Vision of the Consecrated Life in India Today**

Renewed vision in consecrated life is doable when we have experienced the person of Christ and this experience will open us to become the emissaries of Christ by reaching out to his people of all echelon. Joan Chittister, the Benedictine sister who is one of the most expressive woman spiritual leaders of our age about the crisis among consecrated persons as “the crisis of meaningfulness and relevance”.<sup>63</sup> Today this meaninglessness is providing the opportunities to renew our vision and mission of the consecrated life in the church.

Today, we need renewed vision and mission, with new enthusiasm, new life, new vigor, to love the Lord as mystics and serve his people as prophets especially by feeding the hungry, giving water to the thirsty, welcoming strangers, clothing the naked, nursing the sick and the unacceptable, caring for the emarginated and refuse of the society like Jesus who lived in solidarity with these people (cf. Mt 25:35-36). We need to read the signs of the time and remain more attentive to listen to the movement of the spirit.<sup>64</sup> As messengers of Jesus being rooted in him we are called to reach out to his people without any reservation. The people, church, society, country and the world need today, consecrated men and women who live with their life of mystical vision and prophetic mission. We need men and women who are on fire, with fire in their heart and fast moving feet to reach out to the needy brethren. Thus, we need to renew our commitment to the person of Christ daily and live with a renewed vision and mission as prophetess.

When we live with renewed vision and mission as prophets and mystics, the consecrated life will continue to be present in the Church as fruitful and meaningful channel of God’s blessings. Pope John Paul II was totally convinced that the consecrated life will be always present in the Church, though individual Institutes may die. This is how the Pope articulates his hope and conviction in *Vita Consecrate*:

The various difficulties stemming from the decline in personal and apostolates must in no way lead to a loss of confidence in the evangelical vitality of the consecrated life, which will always be present and active in the Church. While individual Institutes have no claim of permanence, the consecrated life itself will continue to sustain among the faithful the response of love towards God and neighbor. Thus it is necessary to distinguish the historical destiny of a specific Institute or form of consecrated life from the ecclesial mission of the consecrated life as such. The former is affected by changing circumstances; the latter is destined to perdure.<sup>65</sup>

Pope gives hope for our meaningful existence. When we live with a renewed vision and mission our life remains as the symbol of unity, love, forgiveness, peace and joy. Today, tomorrow and in the future we need consecrated life which is in the heart of the Church. Without the meaningful existence of the consecrated life the church cannot continue to proclaim Christ to the world. So let us march together with a renewed vision and mission to fulfill the plan through Jesus, with Jesus and in Jesus, together with our brothers and sisters as mystics and prophets by looking at the past gratefully, present joyfully and in the future hopefully. Joan Chittister, said; "Nothing from the past is secure. Nothing in the future is clear. Risk is the new asceticism of Religious life".<sup>66</sup>

## Conclusion

The invitation for the renewed vision of the consecrated life is one of the signs of the time. As the followers of Christ we are confronted to live radically like our master Jesus in this century, as we pass through the various challenges of life. To live this radicalism we are offered to go back to the source and get connected to the person of Christ in every moment of our existence as mystics. Through this connectedness with Christ we get strength to share our having and being with others especially to the poor and the marginalized as prophets and emissaries. Thus, renewed vision is possible if we are rooted in him who has called us and by being his emissary for his people. This is the call of each consecrated person today. If we do not respond to the message of the Lord through these two great commandments; love of God and love of

our fellow beings as mystics and prophets to be his emissaries our existence in this world and especially in our country, will be irrelevant. Without these two dimensions in Christian life and especially consecrated life will not have future. As Karl Rahner said “future of the Christian either will be a mystic or does not exist at all”.

## End Notes

<sup>1</sup> Joachim Inigo, “A Spirituality for the Religious of Our Time”, in *Consecrated Life in the Third Millenium*, ed., Joe Eruppakkatt (Mumbai: St Pauls, 2004), 9.

<sup>2</sup> *Perfectae Caritatis*, 2.

<sup>3</sup> *Perfectae Caritatis*, 2.

<sup>4</sup> Paul Puthanangady, *Chosen for the World: A New Way of Being Religious in the Third Millenium* (Bangalore: NBCLC Publications, 2003), 27.

<sup>5</sup> CRI National Assembly Yesu Krist Jayanti 2000: *Religious Life in a New Era* (Delhi: C.R.I House, 2000), 11.

<sup>6</sup> *Vita Consecrata*, 1.

<sup>7</sup> *Evangelii Gaudium*, 3.

<sup>8</sup> Catherine, “New Challenges and New Prospects,” in *Consecrated Life in the Third Millenium*, 35.

<sup>9</sup> George Soares-Prabhu, “The Synoptic Love Commandment” in *Collected Writings of George Soares-Prabhu*, ed., F.XD’Sa, Vol.4 (Pune: Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth, 2001), 259.

<sup>10</sup> Venceslaus Lawrence, “Rediscovering the Identity of Consecrated Life in the Changing World”, in *Sannyasa*, Vol.IX, No.2 (Bangalore: Claretian Publication, 2014): 65.

<sup>11</sup> Jacob Parappally, “God of Surprises amidst Men of Certainties”, in *Light and Truth*, Vol.5 (December 2014): 11.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>13</sup> Kurien Kunnupuram, *Prophets of the Lord Friends of the Poor* (Mumbai: St Pauls, 2014), 265.

<sup>14</sup> John Izzo, *Five Secrets You Must Discover Before You Die* (Delhi: Tata-McGraw-Hills, 2008), 68.

<sup>15</sup> Kurien Kunnupuram, *Prophets of the Lord Friends of the Poor*, 266.

<sup>16</sup> Venceslaus Lawrence, “Rediscovering the Identity of Consecrated Life in the Changing World”, 66.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 66.

<sup>18</sup> Albert Nolan, *Jesus Today: A Spirituality of Radical Freedom*, 206.

<sup>19</sup> Venceslaus Lawrence, “Rediscovering the Identity of Consecrated Life in the Changing World”, 69-



- <sup>20</sup> Lesser, *Sparks to Set the World on Fire: A Fresh Look at the Religious Life* (Mumbai: St Pauls, 2008), 85.
- <sup>21</sup> Kurien Kunnupuram, *Prophets of the Lord Friends of the Poor*, 152.
- <sup>22</sup> Ibid., 152.
- <sup>23</sup> *Vita Consecrata*, 33.
- <sup>24</sup> Isaac Padinjarekuttu, *Consecrated Life through Two Millenium* (Mumbai: The Pauline Sisters Bombay Society, 2008), 183.
- <sup>25</sup> Jacob Parappally, "God of Surprises amidst Men of Certainities", 11.
- <sup>26</sup> *Gaudium et Spes*, 69.
- <sup>27</sup> Pope Paul VI, "On Poverty", *For all the Religious*, Papal Document, (May: 1964).
- <sup>28</sup> Diarmuid O'Murchu, *Consecrated Religious Life : The Changing Paradigms* (Bangalore: Claretian Publications, 2006), 75.
- <sup>29</sup> *Perfectae Caritatis*, 14.
- <sup>30</sup> J.M. Lozano, *Life As Parable: Reinterpreting the Religious Life*, (Bangalore: Claretian Publications, 1988), 163-164.
- <sup>31</sup> *Lumen Gentium*, 43.
- <sup>32</sup> *Perfectae Caritatis*, 14.
- <sup>33</sup> *Evangelii Gaudium*, 14.
- <sup>34</sup> *Perfectae Caritatis*, 14.
- <sup>35</sup> Diarmuid O'Murchu, *Poverty, Celibacy and Obedience: A Radical Option for Life* (Mumbai: Pauline Publication, 2001), 93.
- <sup>36</sup> Diarmuid O'Murchu, *Poverty, Celibacy and Obedience: A Radical Option for Life*, 94
- <sup>37</sup> Joe Tauro, "The Gospel Vitality and the Emerging Trends of Covenant Discipleship, in *Sannyasa*, Vol.IX, No.2 (Bangalore: Claretian Publication, 2014): 82.
- <sup>38</sup> M.Violita, "A New Awakening for Religious Life Today", in *Consecrated Life in the Third Millennium: Challenges and Prospects*, 34.
- <sup>39</sup> Francis Serrao, "Integration of Mission and Pastoral Aspects in Ministry" Talk given for the Celebration of the VI Provincial Chapter of the Ursulines of Mary Immaculate for the Bangalore Province (Bangalore: 2014): November 8<sup>th</sup>. 5.
- <sup>40</sup> George Soares-Prabhu, Biblical Spirituality of Liberative Action in *Collected Writings of George Soares-Prabhu*, ed., Scaria Kuthiralkkattel, Vol.3 (Pune: Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth, 2003), 133-134.
- <sup>41</sup> *Evangelii Gaudium*, 2.
- <sup>42</sup> Kurien Kunnupuram, *Prophets of the Lord Friends of the Poor*, 15-16.
- <sup>43</sup> Francis Serrao, "Integration of Mission and Pastoral Aspects in Ministry", 3.

- <sup>44</sup> In December 1993, the U.N General Assembly adopted a landmark resolution on gender Violence called *Declaration on the elimination of Violence against Women*. See in *Women: Looking Beyond 2000* (New York: UNO, 1995), 17-24.
- <sup>45</sup> Kochurani Abraham, "The Place and Role of Women in the Catholic Church", in *Towards The Full Flowering of the Human* (Mumbai: St.Pauls, 2011), 50.
- <sup>46</sup> Evelyn Monteiro, "The call of women religious to live prophetically", in *Asian Journal for Religious*, Vol.53, No.3 (Pune: Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth, 2008): May, 24.
- <sup>47</sup> Inigo Joachim, "Empowering Women as Evangelizers", in *Asian Journal of Vocation and Formation*, Vol.XXXIX, No.1 (Pune: 2014), January-June, 33.
- <sup>48</sup> Pope Francis, "Pope's Message to Men: Don't be Machists Listen to women more" in *Times of India*, (Pune: Bennet, Coleman & Co.Ltd., 2015): January 19<sup>th</sup>, 15.
- <sup>49</sup> Amelia Vasquez quotes a woman in the FABC Paper 72: *Women and Church services to Life in Asia*.
- <sup>50</sup> *CRI National Assembly Yesu Krist Jayanti 2000: Religious Life in a New Era*, 30-31.
- <sup>51</sup> Kochurani Abraham, "The Place and Role of Women in the Catholic Church", in *Towards The Full Flowering of the Human*, 67-68.
- <sup>52</sup> Samuel Rayan, *Nature, Woman and the Church: Indian Christian Reflections on Ecology, Feminism and Ecclesiology*, Collected Writings of Samuel Rayan, Vol.1, ed., Kurien Kuunumpuram (Delhi: ISPCK, 2013), 150.
- <sup>53</sup> Lesser, *Sparks to set the world on Fire: A Fresh Look at the Religious Life*, 97.
- <sup>54</sup> Evelyn Monteiro, *Women in Mission* (Chennai: Arumbu Publications, 2008), 132.
- <sup>55</sup> Margaret, *Women in Mission*, 161.
- <sup>56</sup> *Gaudium et Spes*, 1.
- <sup>57</sup> Jacob Parappally, *God of Surprises Amidst Men of Certainities*, 11.
- <sup>58</sup> Violita, "A New Awakening for Religious Today", 33.
- <sup>59</sup> Joseph Xavier, "Wake Up the World", 10.
- <sup>60</sup> Albert Nolan, *Jesus Today*, 80.
- <sup>61</sup> Evelyn Monteiro, "The Call of Women Religious to Mystical Contemplation", in *Asian Journal for Religious*, Vol.53, No.2 (Pune: Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth, 2008) : March, 24.
- <sup>62</sup> Evelyn Monteiro, "The Call of Women Religious to Mystical Contemplation", 24.
- <sup>63</sup> Anu George, "Prophetic Mysticism: The call of Empowered Women Religious", 1.
- <sup>64</sup> Paul Puthanagady, *Chosen for the World: A New Way of being Religious in the Third Millenium*, 'Introduction' by Thomas Panakezhram, v-vi.
- <sup>65</sup> *Vitae Consecrata*, 63.
- <sup>66</sup> Diarmuid O'Murchu, *Consecrated Life: the changing Paradigms*, 78.

# **Consecrated Religious Life as a Contrast Society: Pieris' Perspective**

**Helen Dantis**

## **Introduction**

Defining the consecrated religious life has been intricate. In pursuing such a scheme, either its 'essence' or 'existence' or both have been under consideration. Aloysius Pieris<sup>1</sup> claims consecrated religious life to be a 'contrast society'. A contrast society is one that does not share the obnoxious values of a society but 'witnesses to a different set of values and a different way of being human.'<sup>2</sup> In reality, a contrast society is necessitated due to the fact of overwhelming contrast experiences: 'human experiences of negativity at both personal and social level.'<sup>3</sup> The poor of our world suffer this indignity intensely and immensely.

This essay is an exploration into the 'contrast' nature of consecrated religious life from the perspective of Aloysius Pieris: his sense of the consecrated religious life, his designation to the consecrated religious, the linkage he establishes for them, the manner of service expected from them, the extraordinary privileges they possess as a contrast society, and his interpretation of the evangelical counsels. The study seeks to accentuate the role of the consecrated religious in addressing the contrast experiences. This is because saving people from 'untimely and inflicted death' is a central demand for all human beings and for Christians in particular;<sup>4</sup> in terms of the consecrated religious, it is the fundamental way to be in tune with the God of life.

## **1. Consecrated Religious Life: Significance**

A life of such worth Pieris expounds as 'a movement of men and women who abandoned Rome and fled to the desert to seek a society where all are equal, where the only authority comes from God through wisdom, experience, and love'. This means that



the seed idea of religious life is as discovered in revelation is not a churchy form of existence with vows serving only as means of personal holiness. It is also a protest against any social order civil or ecclesiastical, which serves other gods. Through opted poverty and evangelical obedience, it partakes in Yahweh's vow to struggle with the oppressed against the principalities and powers that oppress them.<sup>5</sup>

To the extent the consecrated religious respond to situations evoking indignation and protest because they are unworthy of human beings on the one hand and on the other hand they join Yahweh against oppression, they grow to be contrast society. Precisely this facet of the consecrated religious renders Pieris term them 'poor.'

## 2. Contrast Community as the Poor, Comprises Two Categories

Pieris groups the poor of diverse nature<sup>6</sup> into two categories: as the **victims** of *Mammon*,<sup>7</sup> who serve as the true vicars of Christ on earth and as the **renouncers** of *Mammon*, who witness to God's Reign on earth as the true followers of Christ.<sup>8</sup> More specifically, the first category consists of those who are forced by undesirable circumstances to be socially downtrodden and to the second category belongs to those who voluntarily practice detachment in everything.

### 2.1. The Poor as Victims of Mammon

The first category of the poor involves the victims of *Mammon*-worshippers.<sup>9</sup> The subversive conspiracy of the Mammon-worshippers or the 'powerful'<sup>10</sup> breeds a substantial category of the non-persons; they are the non-existent of our society. In other words, when 'wealth' turns out to be 'an object of desire and false worship' for some, victims are created; they are the poor. Pieris calls them the 'least sisters and brothers of Jesus.' He assigns them with a unique role: "they receive our love in Christ's name and thus open the gate of the Kingdom for us."<sup>11</sup> This means that they are the eschatological judges of nations. To be specific, a person's entry into the Kingdom of God is determined by his/her conduct towards the poor (Ezek 18: 7) and service to the poor (Mt 25: 31-46). The victims of *Mammon* are not only the eschatological judges, they are also the vicars of Christ: in them, one meets and serves Christ (Mt 25: 31-46; Mk 9: 36-37, 41).<sup>12</sup> More

explicitly, they mediate his presence and act in his name. The victims of *Mammon* are the eschatological judges, the vicars of Christ; they are also the covenant partners with God. They are elected by God to be a liberating force in the world. By according the unique status to the poor, Pieris seems to present a totally different face of the Kingdom of God in which the foundations of the old order crumble: the mighty will be cast down and the lowly lifted up (Lk 1: 52).

Concerning the election of the poor, two points are to be noted. First, that the sole basis of their election is their victimhood. However, this is no reason for them to so focus on the victimhood that the horizon of the Kingdom is darkened and disappears. Their role as victims is no invitation for victimization, on the contrary. Their election is to be a liberating power in the world, in view of the Kingdom. Second, their election and assignment is for others and not above others. The election of the poor does not point to exclusivism or to their superiority over others. Their selection is in view of the Kingdom of God. To bring them to the awareness of their role in building the Reign of God, or to conscientize them,<sup>13</sup> they may need the help of the second category of the poor, who renounce powerful connections with the oppressive systems and join hands with the oppressed.<sup>14</sup>

## 2.2. *The Poor as Renouncers of Mammon*

The second category of the poor consists of the renouncers of *Mammon*. Precisely because they renounce *Mammon*, they are the poor. Pieris places the consecrated religious in this category. The renouncers of *Mammon* are 'the evangelically poor who receive their mission through their solidarity with the poor.' A prerequisite for solidarity with the poor is not only renouncing the *Mammon* but also renouncing the powerful connections with the oppressive systems and joining hands with the oppressed. Thus, they are followers of Jesus in his renunciation (i.e., relativization of all things in terms of God's Reign) in the spirit of the Beatitudes. Unlike the condition of the victims of *Mammon* who suffer imposed poverty, the renouncers of *Mammon* choose poverty voluntarily. Precisely this voluntary choice guides them to undertake a liberative struggle on behalf of the poor, the victims of *Mammon*. As Moses after having renounced his institutional security in Egypt had conscientized the oppressed Israel, the renouncers of

*Mammon* conscientize the victims of *Mammon*, to accept their role in building God's Kingdom. The renouncers of *Mammon*, due to their voluntary poverty are the true disciples of Jesus (Mk 4: 21-28; Lk 5: 28).<sup>15</sup> By way of renunciation, they share their possessions with the dispossessed; they accumulate no surplus. In conclusion, Pieris' reflection on the 'renouncers of *Mammon*' can be taken to mean that consecrated religious as 'renouncers of *Mammon*' orient themselves necessarily towards the liberative struggle undertaken by God in the company of victims, against the oppressive dominant systems<sup>16</sup>. Based on the foregoing illustration, the significance of consecrated religious life as contrast society – made of the poor –, can be elucidated as renouncing *Mammon* or assuming poverty voluntarily, indentifying with the poor in solidarity and conscientizing them regarding their role in building the Kingdom of God. Conversely, the 'victims of *Mammon*' play a key role in shaping the existence of the 'renouncers of *Mammon*' into contrast society. We explore below their linkage.

### 3. Basis of the Bond of the Poor

The account of the poor as comprising two categories – the victims of *Mammon* and the renouncers of *Mammon* – unfolds a specific facet, namely, their interrelatedness. Pieris has drawn our attention to this fact by referring to the gospels in which the poor are the brothers and sisters of Jesus. They are those who leave father and mother... for the sake of Jesus and the Gospel (Mk 10: 29-30). The poor are also the marginalized (Mt 12: 25). As victims of the system they proclaim the Reign of God more powerfully. They, the excluded (women, children, lepers, publicans, the tormented, those in the jaws of death) who were gathered around Jesus, sought and easily entered the company of Jesus to the scandal of the self-righteous.<sup>17</sup>

Pieirs links the two groups not merely in terms of the concerns of this world, but also and specifically in terms of their task for the Kingdom of God, which is biblical shorthand for ultimate emancipation – social, personal and cosmic. Their interrelatedness is in view of the Reign of God: 'The Company of Jesus gathers the two groups into one sacrament of God's Reign on earth, in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, striving to reflect the community-image of the Triune God'. Thus, they are the co-signatories of the covenant.<sup>18</sup> They strive to build the Kingdom of



God by their unwillingness (voluntary poor) and their inability (poor by circumstances) to rely on creatures; this guarantees openness to the Absolute Source of Salvation.<sup>19</sup> In other words, the victimhood of the oppressed and the renouncer's solidarity with victims accords them the status of primary addressees of God's Reign and its eventual announcers. They are also the inheritors and carriers of the Kingdom. Their powerlessness and their poverty place them into a covenantal intimacy with God.<sup>20</sup>

Pieris rightly highlights the interrelatedness between the two categories of the poor. He also underscores the additional responsibility of those who choose poverty voluntarily. He claims: "voluntary poverty is an indispensable prerequisite for the just order of society wherein forced poverty has no right to exist."<sup>21</sup> The significance of voluntary poverty is explored below.

#### **4. Voluntary Poverty as 'Slaving Lovingly': Manner of Service**

Pieris has contributed a great deal towards formulating *An Asian Theology of Liberation* (1988). The reality of contrast experiences causes the quest for liberation. Asian religiosity and Asian poverty are the two poles of his theology. In illustrating his stance specifically on poverty, he concurs with the tenets of Liberation Theology (as formulated in the sub-continent of Latin America). He recommends something more than what has been proposed by the Liberation theologians in the pursuit of achieving full humanity for all human beings. In order to determine the right attitude to the reality of Asian poverty, drawing from the Buddhist perspectives (the major religion of Sri Lanka), he advocates 'voluntary poverty'. It is first of all an inner struggle for liberation from the power of *Mammon* – greed, acquisitiveness, and the false gods of materialism. Moreover, it is a political strategy in the liberation of human society from *Mammon*, and organized sin.<sup>22</sup> In other words, it is a struggle against forced poverty and for liberation from oppression.<sup>23</sup>

D. Tombs offers an alternative interpretation to the concept of 'voluntary poverty'. He claims that it is not destitution but moderation, which consists of a genuine rejection of consumerist cravings and a

radical re-orientation of values away from materialism. His position emerges from his sense of voluntary poverty that its central principle is that earthly goods must be relativized to truly human needs and must be shared fairly. This, he contends as the central truth of Buddhism and a necessary component of liberation as well. In this connection, he draws a parallel between Buddha's renunciation of wealth and Christ's incarnation, both oriented towards a life of solidarity with the oppressed.<sup>24</sup> Tombs does not seem to be radical enough in his interpretation of voluntary poverty. This is because vowed poverty, if in solidarity with real poverty, cannot but be the response to a call from the side of God in the real poor. It cannot be some kind of mere strategy ("the solution") to address poverty. Besides, there is more at stake. This is the reason why Gutiérrez insists on understanding 'option for the poor' as a divine option.<sup>25</sup> This is about God's choice. Otherwise, we risk glorifying poverty in a way that removes the obligation to struggle against poverty.

Corresponding to our assessment of Tombs and in line with his own stance on voluntary poverty, Pieris illustrates that "voluntary poverty is an indispensable prerequisite for the just order of society wherein forced poverty has no right to exist."<sup>26</sup> In underscoring voluntary poverty, he denounces 'voluntary poverty divorced from service to the oppressed and struggle against the structural causes of poverty'. How does voluntary poverty operate? From Pieris' reflection on poverty it can be asserted that choosing poverty voluntarily is 'slaving lovingly';<sup>27</sup> its objective is "to eliminate any kind of slavery imposed on humans by other humans and struggle to embrace the true cult of Yahweh which coincides with the covenantal obligation to 'slave lovingly' for one another, especially for the weak ones."<sup>28</sup> This amounts to saying that loving God in one another is serving God in one another. 'Slaving lovingly' would also mean to struggle to be poor; it is therefore, a struggle for the poor. The struggle 'for the poor' concerns specifically the need to address the structural injustices. This is because poverty is the consequence of the greed of the wasteful few.<sup>29</sup>

Pieris' contention that voluntary poverty is an indispensable prerequisite for the just order of society operates as a useful principle within the framework of the tenets of Liberation Theology; in particular,

its key principle – the preferential option for the poor. When voluntary poverty operates as a principle in the world, in other words, when wealth is distributed according to need (Acts 4: 34-35), wealth ceases to be *Mammon*; distribution according to need also curbs one's slavery to greed<sup>30</sup>. When we speak of the voluntary poverty of the consecrated religious, it would mean denouncing *Mammon* on the one hand and slaving lovingly for the victims of *Mammon*. The choice of poverty by consecrated religious is motivated by the Reign of God – when poverty is voluntarily embraced in view of God's Reign, it amounts to the evangelical freedom that Jesus proposed in the Beatitudes.<sup>31</sup>

### 5. The *Magisterium* of the Poor: Privileges of the Contrast Society

The contrast society consisting of the poor is accorded with a unique privilege: it is the third *magisterium*.<sup>32</sup> The *magisterium* of the poor operates as a corrective to the two *magisteria*<sup>33</sup> in the Church that have unwittingly abdicated their magisterial authority by ceasing to be poor like Jesus.<sup>34</sup> The third *magisterium* is chosen by God as the vehicle of God's presence and action in educating the world in the ways of God and in transforming human history into the history of salvation. It serves as a corrective to the extent it is formed as a social category of people as opposed to the powerful and the wealthy.<sup>35</sup>

The *magisterium* is the teaching authority in the Church. Pieris underscores that poverty is an indispensable qualification for teaching with the authority of Christ. The Twelve, before being sent on mission, hear from Jesus that "They who listen to you listen to me" (Lk 10: 16); however, this assurance is received only after they were summoned by him to evangelical poverty (Lk 10: 1-15). The first category consisting of those who are forced by underside circumstances – organized greed – to be socially downtrodden are the 'lowly ones'. The second category consisting of those practicing evangelical poverty, the 'holy ones' are the **true** 'doctors and professors' of the Church. The first category meets the credentials of being the teaching authority by guarantying our salvation; this, they do in return for our service to them (cf. Mt 25; Lk 10). The second category fulfils the criterion by witness to God through professing their faith publicly.



By implication, claims Pieris, that both the ‘frontier ministry of theologians and the local ministry of bishops cannot claim the office of a *magisterium* without belonging to the category of the biblical poor’. This means that the official *magisterium*’s credibility for teaching derives from being poor in spirit and by becoming one with the socially poor – “until they too [the official *magisterium*] become poor in spirit by becoming one with the socially poor, neither bishops nor theologians will be believed as the *magisterium*.”<sup>36</sup> While the official *magisterium* should be educated in the mysteries of God by the poor, the consecrated religious are challenged to renounce *Mammon*. The challenge is evident in the reflection Pieris presents on the evangelical counsels.

## 6. Evangelical Counsels as Guidelines to the Contrast Society

Corresponding to his understanding of the consecrated religious life as a contrast society, Pieris interprets the evangelical counsels – which he terms as the vows, – as guidelines to be and to build contrast society. Accordingly, unlike the traditionally held view regarding the number of vows as three – poverty, chastity, and obedience, Pieris maintains that obedience and poverty are the two vows. More specifically, obedience and poverty constitute one basic baptismal commitment.<sup>37</sup> As such, the whole Church is called to pronounce them enabling her to be what she is called to be – the ‘contrast society’. Consecrated religious practice these vows in an eminent manner proclaiming the supremacy of God and the inviolable dignity of every man and woman. In other words, the profession of the vows is a confession of faith in the only God and an open declaration to renounce every form of slavery to all other gods and idols.<sup>38</sup>

### 6.1. Evangelical Obedience

The ‘total allegiance’ of a consecrated person to Yahweh and the subsequent proclamation of and striving towards the ‘inviolable dignity’ of human person can be called the evangelical obedience. In vowing obedience, a member of a contrast society declares that ‘only God rules his/her life.’<sup>39</sup> Jesus is the example to follow in this regard. In obedience to his Father, he abolished every kind of domination and power and chose the poor and powerless as his proxy. His radical ways were in view of the Kingdom. In order to represent the Kingdom

in his person and message, he chose symbols such as a donkey ride (Mt 21: 2-6) and the Way of the Cross (Jn 19: 17ff). In brief, in obedience to God's will, he denounced everything that was not in view of the Kingdom of God. The early apostles of Jesus truly lived up to his expectation of them as his proxy by renouncing power and possessions; this is the chief reason due to which 'those who listened to (obeyed) them listened (obeyed) to Christ' (Lk 10: 16).<sup>40</sup>

Professing evangelical obedience guarantees a blood-relationship with Jesus (Mt 12: 48-49). This bond enables the person to both 'listen' and execute that, which has been listened. Executing the Word is important because "God's word is not merely an expression of God's will, but also its expression (Is 55:11), ... the word is not heard if it is not executed" (Lk 6: 46-47; 11: 28).<sup>41</sup> Pieris observes that the God who calls people to obey and execute the Word is a listener as well. God hears the cry of the people who call on God from their bondage and oppression (Ex 2: 23-25). God does not merely hear their cry for help, but also opts to make their cry God's own; God calls them to found a contrast society, which would serve all generations as a memory of the future, a future to be realized by the whole of humankind. Consecrated religious, the covenant partners with God, through their obedience to God alone and their denouncement of all that is not of the Kingdom of God, strive to build the contrast society here on earth. More specifically, when they risk fighting against enslavement by any absolutes other than God,<sup>42</sup> they live their obedience profoundly.

## **6.2. *Evangelical Poverty***

A life that owes total allegiance to Yahweh in obedience, strives to fight against enslavement by absolutes other than God.<sup>43</sup> this, for Pieris is evangelical poverty. Such existence according to him is 'growth in aesthetic experience' consisting of two factors, namely, a non-addiction to anything whatsoever and a critical distance from everything on earth. The former means to live by the principle, 'little is beautiful', 'surfeit is hideous'. One's inability to practise non-addiction to persons, objects, knowledge..., places one in the position of a bee that gets glued to the honey through gluttony and thus turns its source of nourishment into a lethal drug. The latter (critical distance from everything) suggests three components: first, an 'in-God' perspective – being ever present in one's

day-to-day encounter with creation. In other words, it is a 'mission to mediate tears and consolation'; the mission distinguishes an authentic human life from a merely hominal existence.' Second, to maintain a creative distance from power that comes from an accumulation of knowledge. Third, evangelical obedience to God's saving will – it is to work with God in partnership for the Reign of God, the New Heaven, and the New Earth. The three facets guide consecrated religious to evangelical poverty; however, they are not a given but are to be acquired and fostered until they become a permanent posture of one's heart. Rightly, therefore, evangelical poverty is growth in aesthetic sensibility towards fighting against enslavement by absolutes other than God.<sup>44</sup>

While Pieris insists on the two-above factors, namely, non-addiction to anything whatsoever and a critical distance from everything on earth, as requirements for true evangelical poverty, he declares that consecrated religious live poverty truly only when they live the true humanizing features, namely, giving up all resources in a spirit of poverty and consequently distributing them with the needy (Acts 2: 44-45; 4: 32-35).<sup>45</sup>

### 6.3. *Celibacy and Chastity*

Pieris claims that obedience and poverty are the only two kerygmatic vows. Chastity can claim its place as a vow only if it is ready to lose its traditional sense: 'endowed with an innate potentiality to make itself a god, an idol, a cult of a kind'. It needs to shed its tendency for solitary life while defining the solitary life as 'communion'. Otherwise, consecrated religious life would turn into a counter-witness to Yahweh's Reign.<sup>46</sup>

Pieris defines chastity in terms of communion; in doing so, he differentiates between chastity and celibacy<sup>47</sup> and prefers to use the latter term in discussing the vow concerned. While terming chastity as a non-idolatrous communion with creatures and celibacy as an evangelical counsel, he underlines that the vow of celibacy is not an option for solitary life. For, in his view, a non-relating or unrelated individual self ceases to be a human person. He maintains that consecrated religious life, far from being a solitary affair, is a means to educate persons in the aesthetics of the Kingdom by adopting the



principle of non-addiction and critical distance. Educating into these two principles entails also being able to smile at the ugly in oneself. All of these equip a consecrated religious to advance in celibate chastity, transforming chastity into communion.

No doubt, in Piers' view, the vow of chastity gains its credibility from the vows of obedience and poverty. Nonetheless, when chastity is viewed as 'communion', it has greater significance to the other two vows. 'Chastity as communion', operating within radical obedience, launches Yahweh's Reign of love. 'Chastity as communion' operating within radical poverty incarnates that love as human solidarity. In other words, if allegiance to God alone (obedience) and the renunciation of *Mammon* (poverty) do not form an intrinsic dimension of vowed life, chastity turns to be a cultic object.<sup>48</sup> The vow of chastity, in order to be an evangelical counsel and not a cult of self-perfection, has to remain within the parameters of obedience and poverty.

An assessment of Pieris' perception of vows guides us to deem the vows as 'a programme of struggle for full humanity and not an automatic status to a super-cosmic state'. In view of fulfilling the responsibilities of the vowed life, a vowed person ought to orient him/herself towards the Kingdom of God. If on the other hand, one glues one's selfish eyes on oneself, or on co-pilgrims or on earthly possessions idolatrously, instead of keeping them fixed on the one that stands in the horizon summoning and guiding the journey, one might miss the orientation altogether.<sup>49</sup> As dimensions of the Kingdom, the vows challenge the consecrated religious both individually and communally to struggle toward full humanity for all – to be and to build contrast society.

## Conclusion

The significance Pieris attaches to the consecrated religious life as a contrast society and its consequent implication – its designation as the 'poor' due to the fact of embracing poverty voluntarily, the manner of its service – slaving lovingly, its privileges – being the teaching authority in the Church – may sound conceptual and even non-viable.

As a matter of fact, the reality of contrast society and its subsequent implications are Christologically founded. Jesus built a contrast society (Lk 6: 12-16); he himself has been an integral part of it. More

Specifically, he lived the poverty he preached; it was voluntary poverty embraced in view of the Kingdom of God. He was poor in terms of material wealth as well as in spirit (Lk 9: 58). As a *Rabbi*, he taught with authority (Mt 7: 29; Mk 1: 22) unlike his contemporaries (teachers of the Law). The evangelical counsels of obedience, poverty, and celibacy have been his programme of life.

Pieris' delineation of consecrated religious life as a contrast society corresponds with the consecrated religious to the extent they are ready to shed their perception of themselves as a 'super-cosmic' state and regulate their way of life as a programme of struggle for full humanity for themselves and for the others, the marginalized in particular.

## End Notes

Aloysius Pieris is a noted Jesuit theologian from Sri Lanka. For his biographical information, see, Deane William Fenn, *Profiles in Liberation: 36 Portraits of the Third World Theologians* (Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1988), 96-101. John Fuellenbach, *Church: Community for the Kingdom* (Manila: Logos Publications, 2004), 134.

Edward Schillebeeckx, *God the Future of Man* (London, Sydney: Sheed and Ward, 1969), 136.

Jon Sobrino, *No Salvation Outside the Poor: Prophetic Utopian Essays* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2008), 8.

Aloysius Pieris, *The Religious Vows and the Reign of God* ([www.theway.org.uk/black/s065 Pieris .pdf](http://www.theway.org.uk/black/s065%20Pieris.pdf) , accessed 15.01.2015).

The term 'poor' is a biblical 'short-hand' for a variety of 'non-persons'. For details see, Pieris, Aloysius. *God's Reign for God's Poor: A Return to the Jesus Formula. A Critical Evaluation of Contemporary Reformulations of the Mission Manifesto in Roman Catholic Theology and in Recent Jesuit Documents* Second Revised ed. Gonawila-Kelaniya, Sri Lanka: Tulana Research Center, 1999), 4.

*Mammon* is the 'source and sustenance of social structures in which the powerful control the beliefs and behaviour of their fellows'. Pieris, *An Asian Theology of Liberation* (New York: Orbis Books, 1988), 16. In the Biblical literature '*Mammon*' corresponds to greed, avarice and unjust worldly gain (Lk 16: 9-13; Mt 6: 19-21, 24). Pieris, *God's Reign for God's Poor* , 59-61.

The *Mammon*-worshippers are the 'powerful' who control subtly and in several ways: dethroning God with totalitarian governments; divinizing money as in capitalism; invoking God as the 'authority' behind one's 'power' as is often the case of the Church. Pieris, Aloysius Pieris, *Fire and Water: Basic Issues in Asian Buddhism and Christianity* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1996), 174.

The distinction Pieris makes between 'power' and 'authority' is in place at this point. While power is an appropriation only by accumulation of riches, which includes also acquisition of knowledge and education, political acumen and resourcefulness,

prestige and the right connections that are capable of generating power, as do material possessions and money, authority refers to one's willingness to renounce power and refusal to count on riches. Pieris, *Fire and Water*, 173-174.

<sup>11</sup> Pieris, *God's Reign for God's Poor*, 59.

<sup>12</sup> Pieris, *God's Reign for God's Poor*, 42. Theologically, the title, 'vicar of Christ' connotes a pastoral sense, evoking the words of Christ to the apostle Peter, 'feed my lambs ... feed my sheep' (Jn 21: 16-17). The title is used in Catholicism to refer to the bishops and specifically to the bishop of Rome – the Pope. The Vicar of Christ is one who stands in place of the real sovereign, i.e., Jesus Christ in order to tend God's flock towards its true home, the Kingdom of God. See also, Jon Sobrino, *Not in Salvation Outside the Poor: Prophetic Utopian Essays* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2008), 75.

<sup>13</sup> Freire informs that conscientization is a painful excruciating moment; since it calls for conscientizing oneself it demands that 'we die and be reborn again: it is an Easter experience'. For details see, Paulo Freire, "Conscientizing as a Way of Liberating," in *Liberation Theology: A Documentary History*, ed. Affred T. Hennelly, (Maryknoll, New York, 1990) 5-12.

<sup>14</sup> Pieris, *God's Reign for God's Poor*, 59-60.

<sup>15</sup> Pieris, *God's Reign for God's Poor*, 68-72.

<sup>16</sup> Pieris, *God's Reign for God's Poor*, 60-61.

<sup>17</sup> Pieris, *God's Reign for God's Poor*, 60-63.

<sup>18</sup> Pieris, *God's Reign for God's Poor*, 61.

<sup>19</sup> Aloysius Pieris, *Prophetic Humour in Buddhism and Christianity: Doing Inter-Religious Studies in the Reverential Mode* (Colombo: The Ecumenical Institute for Study and Dialogue, 2001), 91.

<sup>20</sup> Pieris, *Fire and Water*, 176.

<sup>21</sup> Pieris, *An Asian Theology of Liberation*, 20.

<sup>22</sup> Pieris, *An Asian Theology of Liberation*, 39.

<sup>23</sup> The terms 'voluntary poverty' (evangelical) and 'forced poverty' (sinful) are Pieris' translations of the terms *alpecchata* (contentment with the minimum necessities of life) and *daridrata* (misery that disintegrates persons); they are taken from the Buddhist scriptures. The term *dalit* is derived from the latter expression. George Evers, "A Self Portrait of Aloysius Pieris s.j. (Interview)," in *Encounter with the Word: Essays to Honour Aloysius Pieris sj*, ed. Robert Cruz et al. (Colombo: The Ecumenical Institute for Study and Dialogue, 2004), 665.

<sup>24</sup> Tombs, "Liberation Christology," 183-184.

<sup>25</sup> Gustavo Gutiérrez, "Renewing the Option for the Poor," in *Liberation Theologies Postmodernity, and the Americans*, ed. David Batstone et al. (London, New York: Routledge, 1997), 75.

<sup>26</sup> Pieris, *An Asian Theology of Liberation*, 20.

<sup>27</sup> Aloysius Pieris, "Chastity as Total Consecration to Service," *Vidyajyoti* 58, no. 9 (1994): 548.

<sup>28</sup> Pieris, "Chastity as Total Consecration to Service," 548.

<sup>29</sup> Aloysius Pieris, "To be Poor as Jesus was Poor," *The Way* 24 (1984): 186-197.

<sup>30</sup> Pieris, *An Asian Theology of Liberation*, 20.



<sup>31</sup> Pieris, "Chastity as Total Consecration to Service," 23.

<sup>32</sup> The third *magisterium* takes its origin from a group of seventy-two followers called to renounce all but the bare necessities and said, 'whoever listens to you listens to me' (Lk 10: 16). Jesus left them behind as the teaching authority to teach in his name; he did not leave behind an imperial power as the teaching authority. Similarly, Yahweh chose the 'meek and weak of the Land' as his covenant partners (Zeph 2: 3; 3: 12-3). Pieris, *God's Reign for God's Poor*, 38, 64.

<sup>33</sup> According to Pieris, the two *magisteria* are the pastoral *magisterium* of the bishops and the academic *magisterium* of the theologians.

<sup>34</sup> For a deeper understanding on the 'magisterium' of the faithful' see, Edward Schillebeeckx, "The Teaching Authority of All," *Concilium* 180, no. 4 (1985): 12-22.

<sup>35</sup> Aloysius Pieris, "Prajna Pitha : "Seat of Wisdom," Part I, *Vidyajyoti* 63, no. 1 (1999): 15. For further details on Pieris' understanding of the third *magisterium* see, Aloysius Pieris, *Two Are There, Your Holiness: Suggestions for the Next Pope's Agenda in Line with John Paul II's Invitation in Ut Unum Sint* (<http://www.theo.kuleuven.ac.be/clt/Aloysius%20Pieris.htm>, accessed 08.07.2009).

<sup>36</sup> Aloysius Pieris, *Two Are There, Your Holiness* (<http://www.theo.kuleuven.ac.be/clt/Aloysius%20Pieris.htm>, accessed 08.07.2009). For Sobrino's view on the issue see, Sobrino, *No Salvation Outside the Poor* 28; Jon Sobrino, "The 'Doctrinal Authority' of the People of God in Latin America," *Concilium* 180, no. 4 (1985): 60.

<sup>37</sup> Aloysius Pieris, "Religious Vows and the Reign of God," *The Way, Supplement* 65 (1990): 12-13.

<sup>38</sup> Pieris, *Fire and Water*, 178.

<sup>39</sup> Pieris, *Fire and Water*, 175.

<sup>40</sup> Aloysius Pieris, "The Three Ingredients of Authentic Humanism: An Autobiographical Essay on the Religious Vows," *Vidyajyoti* 56, no. 1 (1992): 17.

<sup>41</sup> Pieris, *Fire and Water*, 175.

<sup>42</sup> Pieris, *Fire and Water*, 75-76, 175.

<sup>43</sup> Pieris, *Fire and Water*, 175.

<sup>44</sup> Pieris, "The Three Ingredients of Authentic Humanism," 13-15.

<sup>45</sup> Pieris, *Fire and Water*, 176-177.

<sup>46</sup> Pieris, *Fire and Water*, 178.

<sup>47</sup> Celibacy is a voluntary renunciation of conjugal and family life; it is practiced for the sake of the gospel. As an evangelical counsel, celibacy practically distinguishes canonically recognized status of the religious. It is for a few. Chastity is an obligatory attitude of mind and heart. It is the 'universal' quality of non-idolatrous communion with creatures. As such, it necessarily accompanies one's common baptismal commitment to obedience and poverty. Chastity is for all. Moreover, chastity as the transparency of obedience and poverty generates all forms of communion and all degrees of intimacy. Pieris, "The Three Ingredients of Authentic Humanism," 18, 20.

<sup>48</sup> Pieris, *Fire and Water*, 182.

<sup>49</sup> Pieris, "The Three Ingredients of Authentic Humanism," 21.

# **Globalization and Democracy: A Prophetic Call and Challenge to Religious Life**

**Selva Rathinam**

## **Introduction**

Is there any connection between globalization and democracy? There is no denying of the fact that there is “a significant correlation between the number of world electoral democracies and total world manufactured exports.”<sup>1</sup> According to Bhagwati, “...openness to the benefits of trade brings prosperity that, in turn, creates or expands the middle class that then seeks the end of authoritarianism.”<sup>2</sup>

## **Globalization leading to Democracy: A Social Perspective**

The case in study to prove the connection between globalization and democracy is the recent civil movement led by Anna Hazare in India. Who is he? He was born on 15 June 1937. He is a prominent Indian social activist who led the Indian anti-corruption movement of Mahatma Gandhi. His hunger strike was to exert pressure on the Indian government, so that, it would enact a stringent anti-corruption law as envisaged in the Jan Lokpal Bill<sup>3</sup> which is a proposed independent anti-corruption law. This Bill is for the institution of an ombudsman<sup>4</sup> with power to deal with corruption in public places.

What is the secret of the success of this movement? One answer could be globalization! Anna Hazare fought against corruption. But corruption in India is not something new. It is as old as the epic of Ramayana where Ravana bribed a guardian of hell to avoid punishment.<sup>5</sup> The success of this movement lies in its connection with globalization. “The near-double-digit economic growth India has enjoyed since the economy was opened up in the early 1990s has elevated millions of people to the middle class. They have long been apolitical,

with many of them shunning the ballot box and forking out bribes to get by sustaining a system where corruption became an unchallenged way of life.”<sup>6</sup> Although India had a long history of civil movements topped by Mahatma Gandhi to end the British Colonial rule, this is an unprecedented instance where India’s middle class took to the streets for a political cause.<sup>7</sup>

## **Globalization leading to democracy: A Biblical Perspective**

Although the word ‘globalization’ is not found anywhere in the Bible, the concept found its place there. In the globalized world all human beings are considered to be people belonging to the universe, sharing a common dignity and destiny. In the book of Genesis right at the very beginning we see that the whole humanity is created by God in his own image and likeness. Thus all of us have a common origin in the creation story. So also, the whole humanity is considered as sinful when the flood destroys the whole humanity in the story of flood. We see in the story of Abraham how the Lord tells him: “By you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Gen 12:3). When we come to the prophetic literature, Amos introduces the theme of ‘International Justice’ for all nations in chapters 1 and 2. There are seven nations symbolizing all nations in the ‘Oracles Against the Foreign Nations.’ When they are lined up before the Lord, the nation occupying the middle position is Edom. Edom is punished for raising its sword *against its brother*. Thus, following the importance of structure in the ancient literature we can conclude that all nations are called to treat each other with brotherly and sisterly love.

In the history of Israel we see that King Solomon opened its frontiers for international trade. He widened his contact through marriage with various princesses belonging to various nations. He sealed trade agreement with foreign rulers like the queen of Sheba. This brought surplus of wealth to the united nation of Israel. Naturally it gave rise to the wealthy middle class who were simmering with anger for the taxation and the forced labour which Solomon imposed upon the nation. Jeroboam, one of Solomon’s commanders was even considered to start a revolt. Since Solomon was so powerful and ruthless, Jeroboam



just fled the country and took refuge in Egypt. But as soon as Solomon died, Jeroboam returned to the land. The ten tribes of the Northern Kingdom chose him as a leader to represent them to the son of Solomon called Rehoboam, so that the new ruler might reduce the taxation. When Rehoboam refused to do so, the Kingdom was divided into North and South. Under the leadership of Jeroboam the Northern Kingdom established a democratic nation where anyone can become a king mustering the support of the people and the prophet. Thus, the globalization initiated by King Solomon led to democracy with the rise of the middle class.

### **Globalization and Democracy: A challenge to the Religious Today**

From the above contextual (Anna Hazare)-textual (King Solomon) socio-biblical analysis we can draw a number of challenges for the present day religious or for any serious believer. Globalization in both social and biblical worlds increased the number of the middle class and heightened the level of conscientization. However, the high handedness of those who hold the power scared the enlightened and the oppressed middle class to revolt. In such precarious and vulnerable situation individuals like Anna Hazare or Jeroboam functioned as catalysts to unlock the oppressed masses. The people of all good will, too, backed such movements and made them as mass movements with eruption of middle class power. If Anna Hazare and Jeroboam can fearlessly throw their lots with their moral power, what prevents the hundreds and thousands of religious or serious minded believers to come forward fearlessly for the cause of the oppressed and the marginalized? In the case of Jeroboam there was a prophet called Ahijah who encouraged him to start a revolt. When Solomon's son Rehoboam set out to start a civil war against the social revolt, there was a prophet called Shemaiah who advised him to step back and to give justice a chance. In the case of Anna Hazare, too, a number of civil right activists and NGOs unconditionally backed his venture. The religious or the serious minded believers, too, can voice their support to those who set out to bring change in the society. With the mass media revolution of the globalized world the movement can become

ly bigger and stronger to widen the democracy. Globalization is a  
 all for all of us to become Anna Hazares and Jeroboams to extend  
 e democracy in the postmodern world.

## Conclusion

“Globalization has many aspects. One aspect is that hatred can be  
 organized and spread throughout the world. But another aspect is that  
 global humanitarian action for the victims of the tsunami around the  
 Indian Ocean was organized within a few hours. Another aspect is  
 that economic relations can promote prosperity and enable people to  
 have decent work. But it also means that economic power can be  
 organized selfishly, thereby standing in the way of economic justice.  
 Anyone who wants to interpret the signs of the times needs to look at  
 both sides: both the opportunities and the dangers of the current  
 developments in the world.”<sup>8</sup> Gilles Kepel argues that Catholics “have  
 speak the language of democracy if they want to be heard by the  
 citizens of present-day Europe or America.”<sup>9</sup> Before the twentieth  
 century, it is true that in some quarters the Church resisted democratic  
 movements, but now it is no longer a viable option. Today the catholic  
 movements should resist secularism and champion human rights and  
 the freedom to assert Christian values within a democratic society.<sup>10</sup>  
 In his Encyclical “*Caritas in veritate*” Pope Benedict XVI makes a  
 reference to the principle of subsidiarity. He explains that subsidiarity  
 is the most effective antidote against any form of all-encompassing  
 welfare state” and is “particularly well-suited to managing globalization  
 and directing it towards authentic human development.” It is the duty  
 of all serious believers and especially the religious to be catalysts in  
 promoting democracy for the welfare of all especially the marginalized  
 in the globalized world.

## End Notes

John A. Does, “Globalization and Democracy: An Empirical Analysis Using A  
 Simultaneous Equation Approach,”

Chagwati, Jagdish, *Free Trade Today*, Princeton University Press, 2002, p. 43.

This is an improvement upon the original anti-corruption bill, known as the Lokpal  
 bill proposed by the government of India.

<sup>4</sup> See [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ombudsman](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ombudsman) accessed on Sep. 04, 2011 which says that an ombudsman is a person who acts as a trusted intermediary between an organization and some internal or external constituency while representing not only but mostly the broad scope of constituent interests.

<sup>5</sup> See Paul de BERNIER, "Anna Hazare's campaign awakens middle class," in [reuters.com/article/2011/08/24/idINIndia-58938520110824](http://reuters.com/article/2011/08/24/idINIndia-58938520110824).

<sup>6</sup> See Paul de BERNIER, "Anna Hazare's Campaign."

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Wolfgang Huber, "The Signs of the Times: Presentation given at the Economic Justice Plenary,"

87. Translated from the German by the WCC language service.

<sup>9</sup> Gilles Kepel, *The Revenge of God: The Resurgence of Islam, Christianity and Judaism in the Modern World* translated by Alan Braley (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), 197.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.



# Discipleship in the Hebrew Bible

James B. Dabhi

In this work, discipleship in the Hebrew Bible is ascertained by studying seven pairs of master-servant. Some pairs are task oriented and, hence, transient in nature; the remainders are succession oriented and, hence, enduring in nature.

## 1. Chief Servant of Abraham

In Gen 24:2a, Abraham initiates the dialogue with his unnamed servant, who is the oldest among all his servants. The adjective employed in the superlative degree “the oldest”<sup>1</sup> may mean chronology of the servant in the recruitment list or status of the servant vis-à-vis the other servants or biological age of the servant. This servant is entrusted with the charge of all Abraham’s possessions. The reader may surmise that the servant occupies the coveted position next to Abraham in Abraham’s household.

Genesis 24:2b-3a presents the procedure of swearing.<sup>2</sup> Genesis 24:3b-8 describes the content of the swearing, in the literary form of dialogue. The servant has to vow that he will bring the bride for Abraham’s son Isaac from Abraham’s ancestral place and family. Abraham’s ancestral place, i.e., Iraq of today, is situated at a great distance from Abraham’s present sojourn, i.e., Israel of today. The servant inquires if the would-be bride hesitates to come to Israel, should Isaac be taken to Iraq? Abraham denies that option, but simultaneously exudes confidence that God, who has made him the promise, will assist the servant in bringing the wife. Abraham still remains open to the eventuality of the bride-to-be’s reluctance to follow the servant to Israel. In that case, the servant is freed from his oath. Genesis 24:9 depicts that the servant binds himself to his master Abraham with the pledge.

Genesis 24:10-67 narrates how meticulously the servant carries out the task assigned to him by his master. Before embarking on his mission, the servant offers prayer to God of his master.<sup>3</sup> After God points out Rebekah to the servant, he again blesses God of his master.<sup>4</sup> When Rebekah's father and brother acquiesce in the proposal made by Abraham's servant for Isaac, the servant bowed to God. After leading Rebekah to Israel, the servant reports everything that transpired to Isaac.<sup>5</sup> In response, Isaac takes Rebekah as his wife. The text does not have the meeting between Abraham and his servant after the servant has accomplished his mission.

The characteristics of discipleship that can be culled from Abraham's servant are: 1) Discipleship is founded on mutual trust between master and servant. 2) Discipleship flourishes when freedom is granted to the servant in grasping the mission fully by inquiring prior to commencing to fulfill it and in utilizing the servant's creativity in carrying out that mission. 3) Discipleship thrives by remaining in constant communion with God. Abraham's servant communicates with God at momentous junctures. 4) Discipleship consists in carrying out the entrusted job, without expecting a reward. Abraham's servant does not visit Abraham at the completion of his work, connoting that the disciple should not seek the reward.

## *2 a. Joseph as Servant of Potiphar*

Joseph, aged seventeen years, becomes the victim of jealousy and hatred of his siblings on following counts: He reports the misdemeanor of his brothers to their father Jacob, which may have been regarded as carrying the tail by his brothers. Their father Jacob has partisan love for Joseph, which is perceived as unwelcome feature by his brothers. The brothers were unable to react to their father for his partiality, but they were able to react to their father's most beloved son Joseph. Joseph dreams of sheaves in the field. His dream is interpreted by his brothers as Joseph's domination over them. In another dream, Joseph views the sun, the moon, and eleven stars bowing down to him. This other dream is deciphered by their father as the whole household of Jacob bowing to the ground before Joseph (Gen 37:2-11).

The jealousy and hatred of the brothers for Joseph are translated into heinous acts. Teenager Joseph is thrown into a cistern. Then,

after drawing him out of the pit, Joseph is sold off to a caravan. The caravan vends Joseph in Egypt to Potiphar, one of the officials of the king of Egypt. Father Jacob is made to believe that Joseph is devoured by wild animals (Gen 37:12-36).

Joseph begins his new phase as purchased servant in Potiphar's house. God accompanies Joseph, which is evident through the prosperity that he brings to Potiphar's household. Joseph becomes the favorite servant of Potiphar and rises in the scale of promotion. Joseph assumes the charge of everything and every person of Potiphar's home, except Potiphar's wife (Gen 39:1-6a).<sup>6</sup>

Potiphar's wife incites, insists, and induces Joseph everyday for an immoral act. Joseph does not accede to this invitation, because his master has made him on a par with himself. The only disparity between Joseph and Potiphar that Potiphar himself has allowed to persist is the right over Potiphar's wife. Only Potiphar is her husband and not Joseph. Joseph is resolved to perpetuate the incredible trust laid on him by his master and not to offend God by indulging into immorality with Potiphar's wife (Gen 39:6b-10).<sup>7</sup> Yet, Joseph is falsely indicted of attempting to molest Potiphar's wife. The allegation is imposed on Joseph in front of Potiphar by Potiphar's wife herself. Joseph's own garment is presented as evidence to Potiphar by Potiphar's wife herself. Potiphar does not even cross examine Joseph, but, based on his wife's testimony and proof of Joseph's garment, convicts Joseph and imprisons him. Joseph does not appeal or defend himself of his innocence (Gen 39:11-20).<sup>8</sup> According to Gen 41:1a, which is a time indicator, Joseph remains in the dungeon for two years.

## ***2 b. Joseph as Second-in-Command of the King of Egypt***

The occasion of Joseph to be brought out of the prison to be presented before the king of Egypt is described in Gen 41:1-13. The king of Egypt summons Joseph and informs him that he has heard that Joseph is able to interpret dreams. With utmost humility, Joseph attributes his ability to God (Gen 41:14-16). The king of Egypt apprises Joseph of his dreams (Gen 41:17-24). Joseph interprets those dreams as God's revelation to the king of Egypt what God intends performing very soon in the land of Egypt, which would affect the next fourteen-year period



(Gen 41:25-32). By rendering the interpretation of the dreams, Joseph's engagement with the king of Egypt is concluded; yet, Joseph offers an unasked for counsel with regard to coping up with severe famine by procuring one-fifth produce from each producer during the plenteous years (Gen 41:33-36). In response to Joseph's sagacious advice, the king of Egypt appoints none other than Joseph himself as his second-in-command (Gen 41:37-45).<sup>9</sup>

Joseph, at the age of thirty years, enters the service of the king of Egypt. Joseph moves diligently through the whole land of Egypt during the seven years of abundant crops. He gathers the grains, maybe from each farmer who is willing to sell to the royal storehouse at the attractive rate, and stores up in every city. On account of his precaution and persuasion, Joseph hoards the grains like the sand of the sea (Gen 41:46-49).

During the years of famine, when all the contiguous countries experience starvation, the land of Egypt has enough to eat at the initial period. As the famine is intensifying, the people of Egypt begin to famish. When they approach the king of Egypt for their survival, he directs them to Joseph. Joseph starts selling grains to the Egyptians and all the neighbors from the storehouses that he has replenished during the years of plenty (Gen 41:54-57).<sup>10</sup> Joseph collects all the money that the buyers can afford and deposits it in the king's treasury. After the people have expended all the monetary units that they possessed, Joseph initiates barter system. The people receive grains in exchange of their livestock. With this move of Joseph, he may be protecting the livestock from extinction in rigorous drought, as he may have better resources than the people have to feed the livestock. After money and livestock, the third unit the people can grant to purchase food during the protracted period of scarcity is their land and their selves. Thus, Joseph gains all the fields of Egyptians for the king and all the citizens of Egypt, except the priests, as the slaves for the king of Egypt. Joseph supplies seed to the people to sow in their fields, but, since the fields belong to the king of Egypt, at the harvest one-fifth of the produce is to be handed over to the king of Egypt. The Egyptians survive the peril of famine, preserving their dignity, on account of Joseph (Gen 47:13-26).<sup>11</sup>

The characteristics of discipleship that can be culled from Joseph as the servant of Potiphar and second-in-command to the king of Egypt are: (1) Joseph manifests himself as the most loyal servant, whose loyalty matches the trust placed in him by his master. (2) He is wrongly accused because of his faithfulness; yet, he does not curse God. He prefers to close his lips than to disclose the evil intention of his master's wife. Such a revelation might malign his master's image, too. (3) Joseph surrenders to his master's injustice without any defense, denoting his deference for his master and master's wife. (4) Joseph sacrifices his career, but not his character. The genuine character of any individual emerges in crisis. (5) As the interpreter of dream, Joseph was sought for only to interpret the king's dreams; yet, Joseph walks an extra mile. He suggests to the king of Egypt the way to respond to God's revelation, manifesting Joseph's magnanimity. (6) As the second-in-command, Joseph plans his project well and executes it so efficiently that, in the time of scanty, the king of Egypt can confidently divert the starving Egyptians to Joseph. On the one hand, Joseph gathers the revenues from the people for the king of Egypt; on the other hand, Joseph preserves the dignity of the people as customers of the king of Egypt. Joseph upholds the dignity of everyone in the worst drought of the land. Honesty and integrity ooze out as his striking traits.

### **3. Hebrew Midwives as the Employee of the King of Egypt**

The names of Hebrew midwives, whom the king of Egypt hires for his pogrom, viz., killing male babies at birth, are mentioned. The literature, like the Book of Exodus, that stems from patriarchy may shun referring to female and, in case of compulsion, may cite her as an unnamed person. Through the names of the midwives, Shiphrah and Puah, biblical authors may want the reader to focus the reader's attention on the trait of these women as the employee of the king of Egypt. The midwives defy the command of the king of Egypt; instead, they follow the dictates of their own conscience. Their conscience is unveiled by the phrase "the midwives feared God." Upon investigation by the king of Egypt apropos of their disobedience, the midwives disclose the vigor of Hebrew mothers in childbirth as the cause. Since the phrase "the fear of God" is utilized second time, forming an inclusio around the disobedience of the midwives to the king's ordinance, the

reason furnished by the midwives for their disobedience is a blatant lie. To save the sons of Israelites, the midwives opt to misinform the king of Egypt. The reward the midwives receive for following their conscience evince that they are ethically right (Exod 1:15-21).

The characteristic of discipleship that can be culled from the midwives as the employee of the king of Egypt is: the disciple must evaluate the task entrusted to her/him from the perspective of her/his conscience. The conscience of the servant supersedes the command of the master. It may not be outlandish to equate the conscience of an individual with the will of God expected from that individual.

#### **4. Joshua as Successor of Moses**

Joshua is the new name conferred to Hoshea by Moses. Hoshea belongs to the group of twelve spies sent by Moses to the land of Canaan. Out of the twelve spies, only the name of Hoshea is transmuted to Joshua by Moses, unfolding the special relationship that exists between Moses and Joshua right from the inception (Num 13:1-16). In the past, God too had changed the names of Abraham (Gen 17:5) and Jacob (Gen 32:28), disclosing God's intimate attachment to both of them. The report produced by the ten spies of the land of Canaan disheartens the Israelites. Subsequently, the Israelites decide to replace Moses with someone else as their leader, who will take them back to Egypt. Such a rebellion compels Moses to prostrate before the congregation of the Israelites (Num 13:31-14:5).<sup>12</sup> Joshua laments Moses' vulnerability in front of the Israelites by tearing his garment. Joshua sides with Moses and exhorts the people of Israel not to revolt against God and not to fear the indigenous people of Canaan. Joshua remains unsuccessful in persuading the Israelites (Num 14:6-10a). As a just retribution from God, all the spies succumb to the plague, barring Joshua and Caleb (Num 14:37-38).

God makes Moses cognizant of God's will that Moses will not lead the Israelites into the Promised Land. Moses petitions that a shepherd be appointed in his place for the Israelites (Num 27:12-17). Joshua is God's choice, which is manifested to the Israelites by making Joshua stand in front of the Priest Eleazar in the presence of the Israelites and by making Eleazar discern the will of God. Joshua is Moses' successor,



which is revealed by laying of Moses' hands upon Joshua in the presence of the Israelites and by imparting some of Moses' authority to Joshua (Num 27:18-23).<sup>13</sup> The parallel version in Deut 31:1-8 supplies Moses' age at the time of handing over the baton of leadership to Joshua. Deuteronomy 31:7-8 chalks out the program of Joshua, viz., to usher the Israelites into the Promised Land and to make them possess the land. To paraphrase Joshua's undertaking, he has to conquer the Promised Land from the aborigines and he has to distribute the conquered territories among the twelve tribes of Israel. Deuteronomy 31:23 notes that it is God who commissions Joshua. After the death of Moses, Joshua becomes the leader of the Israelites as depicted in Deut 34:9. Since Moses had laid his hands on Joshua, Joshua is full of the spirit of wisdom.

The characteristics of discipleship that can be culled from Joshua as the successor of Moses are: (1) Joshua enjoys intimate relationship with his predecessor Moses. Joshua is faithful confidant of Moses. (2) Joshua empathizes with his predecessor Moses, when the Israelites rebel against Moses' project of subjugating the Promised Land. Joshua makes a deliberate choice to stand firm by the side of Moses, opposing the vast majority and risking his own life. (3) Joshua receives the spirit of wisdom from Moses. The wisdom is absolutely crucial for the mission of Joshua to conquer the Promised Land and to distribute it amicably and justly among the twelve tribes of Israel. (4) Joshua is the shepherd of the Israelites as per the supplication of Moses. Moses appeals to God to appoint a shepherd over the Israelites to replace him. God commissions Joshua. Shepherd is the one who lays down her/his life for the sake of the one who appoints her/him and for the sake of those for whom she/he is appointed.

## **5. David as the Servant of King Saul**

The spirit of God had departed from King Saul and an evil spirit was tormenting him. If someone plays the lyre, when the evil spirit assaults King Saul, the king may feel better. David is found to possess that musical skill. Besides, he has valor, prudence in speech, and delightful presence. Therefore, King Saul employs David in his service and he loves David (1 Sam 16:14-23). David commutes between his father's house and the king's palace after his new assignment with the king (1

Sam 17:15). According to the compilation of the episodes, the first vital opportunity that David receives to display his loyalty and devotion to his king is to face the challenge posed by Goliath, the Philistine, "Today I defy the ranks of Israel! Give me a man, that we may fight together" (1 Sam 17:10). King Saul and his army were dismayed at this challenge and were terribly afraid (1 Sam 17:1-30). An inexperienced youth David ventures to take the experienced warrior Goliath head on. Relying only on the God of the armies of Israel, David rushes toward Goliath and, using his skill of handling the sling, strikes the Philistine down and beheads him (1 Sam 17:31-54).<sup>14</sup>

David, in the service of King Saul, keeps on achieving ever new heights of success. Consequently, King Saul appoints David over his army (1 Sam 18:5). When the women of the towns of Israel sang and danced at the slaying of Goliath, they inadvertently lauded David more than King Saul. More applause for David than for King Saul by the women enrages King Saul and he envies David to the extent of annihilating him. Therefore, David is removed from the presence of King Saul and is appointed as a commander of thousand soldiers (1 Sam 18:6-16).<sup>15</sup>

The envy and jealousy enforce King Saul to pursue David to destroy him. In one such pursuit, King Saul enters the same cave to relieve himself, wherein David and his companions were hiding. King Saul is completely ignorant of the menace of David's presence there. David has a chance to end the life of King Saul; David's men are persuading David in the name of God to exterminate King Saul. However, David restrains himself; he quietly cuts off only a corner of King Saul's cloak to evince later that he had in fact an opportunity to decapitate King Saul. The only rationale for David's restraint is that King Saul is David's master and God's anointed. In the societal structure of David's time, revenge constituted an element of ethical system. King Saul wanted and, therefore, attempted to murder David. As a matter of fact, King Saul was then chasing David to eradicate him. According to the prevailing ethical mores, David could have interpreted King Saul's entering into the same cave as God bringing King Saul to David so that David would send King Saul to his grave. However, David harnesses his revengeful instinct and lets King Saul remain alive (1 Sam 24:1-22).

On another occasion, King Saul chases David with the identical intention to put David to death. At night, while King Saul was sleeping surrounded by his army, David with his accomplice approaches King Saul. Once again, sleeping King Saul could have been pinned down to the ground with just one stroke of spear, but David refuses to do so. The guiding rationale is the same, i.e., King Saul is God's anointed. David carries away the spear of King Saul and the water jar as evidences that David could have taken the life of King Saul, but has spared it. David has responded the evil of King Saul with the good of his self (1 Sam 26:1-25).

The characteristics of discipleship that can be culled from David as the servant of King Saul are: (1) David is anointed to replace the dethroned King Saul (1 Sam 16:1-13); yet, David does not claim the throne, but prefers to wait and win the heart of dejected King Saul. The approach of David is not authoritarian, but humanitarian. Through his service to King Saul, David establishes his leadership. (2) Risking his life on behalf of his master constitutes another feature of David. When King Saul and the whole army of Israel dare not face one Philistine Goliath, David ventures, relying on God alone, to combat with Goliath. (3) David remains unperturbed at the scope of the envy and jealousy of King Saul. David imparts a lesson that the servant should persevere in the service even if the master is envious. (4) David restrains taking revenge on King Saul, because King Saul is anointed by God. David teaches that the servant should not do what the master is practicing, but should do what the master is preaching. For the servant, the master is an appointee of God. (5) David exhibits no hurry in usurping the power. He commences his life in the royal palace as the servant of King Saul. Service paves the way to leadership. A true leader is a true servant.

## **6. Elisha as the Servant of Elijah**

Elijah escapes toward south, because he is intimidated by Queen Jezebel, and reaches Mount Horeb, a solitary place (1 Kgs 19:1-10).<sup>16</sup> At Mount Horeb, in sheer silence, God encounters Elijah. Elijah is instructed to return to the north and anoint Elisha as prophet in his place (1 Kgs 19:11-18).<sup>17</sup> In obedience to God's instruction, when Elijah finds Elisha at work, he passes by him and throws his mantle



over him. Elijah's mantle produces magnetic effect. Elisha leaves his oxen and runs after Elijah. Elisha seeks permission from his new master for kissing his parents. Upon receiving the permission, Elisha does not kiss his parents, rather he slaughters the oxen and, using the yoke as firewood, he boils the flesh of the slaughtered oxen for the people to consume. Then, he becomes the servant of Elijah (1 Kgs 19:19-21).<sup>18</sup> Elisha solicits permission of kissing his father and mother, but performs something else. Therefore, I interpret the phrase "Let me kiss my father and my mother" as bidding farewell to the past. Elisha was found plowing, denoting that he is a farmer. There were twelve yoke of oxen ahead of him may indicate the size of the field, amount of his wealth, and involvement of his self.<sup>19</sup> A rich, settled, and autocratic person is invited to renounce. Elisha needs time for the transition. The idiomatic expression 'burning the boat' or 'burning the bridge' is actualized by Elisha. From sedentary farmer Elisha becomes itinerant preacher; from autocratic life Elisha adopts theocratic life.

The next farewell Elisha has to bid is to Elijah, which is depicted in 2 Kgs 2:1-12. Elijah and Elisha were at Gilgal. Elijah is summoned by God to Bethel. Elijah wants Elisha to stay on at Gilgal and, thus, to part ways with him. Elisha refuses and cleaves to Elijah. Elisha journeys with Elijah from Gilgal to Bethel, from Bethel to Jericho, and from Jericho to Jordan.<sup>20</sup> At Bethel, at Jericho, and at Jordan, some prophets come up to dissuade Elisha from following Elijah. However, Elisha remains glued to his master. His ardent devotion to his master is exhibited in his becoming a shadow of Elijah. The farewell gift from Elijah that Elisha chooses is the double share of Elijah's spirit.<sup>21</sup> The parting present that Elisha prefers betrays his love for his master and his desire to emulate him in his own life.

The inheriting of the double share of Elijah's spirit by Elisha is demonstrated by the performances of Elisha, which have resemblances with that of Elijah. Elisha divides the water of the Jordan (2 Kgs 2:13-14), as Elijah had done (2 Kgs 2:8). For Elisha, the dividing of the water of the Jordan constitutes the answer to his query that God of Elijah is with Elisha now.<sup>22</sup> Elisha turns the death-dealing water of a certain city into life-enhancing water (2 Kgs 2:19-22), as Elijah had predicted life-giving rain in Samaria after the drought of three years (1

Kgs 18:41-46). Elisha increases the quantity of oil for a widow to save her children from being sold as slaves (2 Kgs 4:1-7), as Elijah had maintained the quantity of flour and oil to sustain the widow and her son during the famine (1 Kgs 17:8-16). Elisha resuscitates the son of a woman from Shunem because of her hospitality (2 Kgs 4:8-37), as Elijah had resuscitated the son of a widow from Zarephath because of her hospitality (1 Kgs 17:17-24). Elisha's gift after his death is life to a dead man (2 Kgs 13:20-21), as Elijah's gift after his ascension into heaven is his spirit to Elisha (2 Kgs 2:9-12).

The characteristics of discipleship that can be culled from Elisha as the servant of Elijah are: (1) To be a disciple signifies to dissociate from one's past irrevocably in order to be available for the exigencies of the present. Elisha relinquishes all that he holds and empties himself of all that he is in order to be imbued with the spirit of Elijah. (2) A disciple clings to her/his master till the finishing line. On the way, there may come many obstacles, but the disciple needs to persevere to gain the maximum from her/his master. Elisha adheres to Elijah once he becomes his servant. His companions remain unsuccessful dissuading him from following Elijah. Subsequently, Elisha receives double share of Elijah's spirit. (3) As the disciple of Elijah, Elisha is able to perform all the feats that Elijah had worked and many more, which are not recorded in this essay. A disciple should emulate her/his master and do more than the master as the disciple has better facilities than the master had.

## **7. Baruch as the Servant of Jeremiah**

During the fourth year of King Jehoiakim of Judah, God mandates Jeremiah to write all his oracles on a scroll in order that the people may heed and return to God (Jer 36:1-3). In response, Jeremiah dictates his oracles to Baruch, who inscribes them on a scroll. Since Jeremiah is forbidden to enter the temple of Jerusalem, he directs Baruch to enter the temple and read aloud the scroll to the people on a fast day. Baruch scrupulously carries out Jeremiah's will (Jer 36:4-10). The officials of King Jehoiakim express their willingness to hear the scroll being read out to them in the palace. Baruch obliges them, but, in response, both Baruch and Jeremiah are warned to go hiding as the officials foresee the threat for both (Jer 36:11-19). Jeremiah comforts

Baruch, who incurs upon himself suffering for no fault of his but because he wrote on the scroll the oracles that Jeremiah dictated to him. God consoles Baruch through Jeremiah not to expect great reward for the services he rendered to Jeremiah. However, the greatest prize God is going to bestow upon Baruch is the life, when all the others will face death. Baruch is present with Jeremiah, when Jeremiah acts as a redeemer to his cousin Hanamel by buying his field. The sealed copy and the open copy of this purchase deal are handed over to Baruch by Jeremiah to preserve them in earthenware (Jer 32:6-15).

The characteristics of discipleship that can be culled from Baruch as servant of Jeremiah are: (1) The disciple is the cooperator of the master. Jeremiah dictates and Baruch writes. Jeremiah is prohibited to enter the temple; therefore, Baruch cooperates with him by entering the temple and reading the scroll to the people on the fast day. (2) The disciple should not expect reward for her/his following her/his master. The greatest reward of the discipleship is the life, where the disciple is sure not to be the victim of perdition. (3) The disciple should involve in all the facets of her/his master's life. Baruch is involved with Jeremiah, when Jeremiah transacts a mundane matter of buying the field.

## Conclusion

The characteristics of discipleship gleaned from the aforementioned seven pairs of master-servant in the Hebrew Bible includes primarily mutual trust, necessary freedom, reliance on God, expecting no reward, utmost loyalty, heartfelt reverence, magnanimity, honesty, integrity, heeding to one's conscience, intimate relationship, empathy, wisdom, readiness to lay down one's life, servitude, perseverance, self-restraint, relinquishing the past, emptying the self, emulation of the master's qualities, cooperation, no counting the cost, and holistic following of the master.

## End Notes

<sup>1</sup> All the biblical quotes in this project are from *The Holy Bible: The New Revised Standard Version: Catholic Edition* (Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 2003).

<sup>2</sup> Gordon Wenham explains the swearing procedure. By putting his hand under Abraham's thigh, the servant is touching Abraham's genitals. In the ancient Orient,

olemn oaths were taken holding some sacred object in one's hand, as it is still customary to take an oath on the Bible before giving evidence in court. Since the Old Testament associates God with life and Abraham had been circumcised as a mark of the covenant, placing servant's hand under thigh made an intimate association with some fundamental religious ideas. An oath by the seat of procreation is particularly apt in this instance, when it concerns the finding of a wife for Isaac. See Gordon Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, Word Biblical Commentary, edited by David A. Hubbard, Glenn W. Barker, John D. W. Watts, and Ralph P. Martin, number 2 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1994), 141.

In his prayer, the servant sets criterion of hospitality to determine the would-be bride's fitness to marry into the family of the paragon of hospitality. The servant devises stiff test, namely, she has to receive him, the wayfarer, and she has to volunteer to water ten thirsty camels. See Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 143.<sup>4</sup> "The man bowed his head and worshiped the Lord" (Gen 24:26). Wenham understands that the use of this pair of words seems to indicate how overwhelmed the servant felt at the way his first prayer had been so quickly and completely answered. See Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 145.

Nothing is said about the servant reporting back to Abraham, but to Isaac (Gen 24:66). Wenham explains that the servant describes Isaac as "my master" in Gen 24:65. Besides, since Abraham's instructions to his servant in Gen 24:2-8 sound like his last will and testament, the most natural reading of the servant reporting to Isaac would suggest that while the servant had been away, Abraham has died. See Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 151.

Wenham adds that Joseph rises in Potiphar's esteem. First, Joseph was promoted to work indoors, instead of being sent into the fields to work. Next, Joseph became Potiphar's personal attendant. Ultimately, Joseph was put in charge of Potiphar's household and was entrusted with all his possessions (Gen 39:4-5). Potiphar abandoned his interest in what Joseph was doing, because Potiphar was so convinced that Joseph was doing the best for him. The phrase "but the food that he ate" in Gen 39:6 may be a euphemism for Potiphar's wife (see Prov 30:20), but it seems more likely to be an idiom for Potiphar's private affairs. See Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 373-374.

According to Wenham, Joseph gives three reasons that the suggestion of Potiphar's wife must be rejected: it is an abuse of the great trust placed in him (Gen 39:6); it is an offense against her husband; it is a great sin against God. See Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 375.

Wenham sheds light that Joseph's rapid exit could easily have compromised Potiphar's wife, had he used the opportunity to explain matters to the rest of the household. Potiphar is furious. Joseph is put in prison. This is somewhat unexpected punishment, because convicted rapists were executed when both parties were free citizens (Deut 22:23-27). A slave assaulting his master's wife would certainly expect a better fate. Presumably, Joseph's protestations of innocence, though unrecorded, were sufficient to convince Potiphar that his wife might not be telling the whole truth. See Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 377.



<sup>9</sup> Wenham elucidates Joseph's position. The job description of Joseph makes him second only to the king in Egypt. His role seems to match that of the Egyptian vizier. The vizier is the great supervisor of all Egypt and all government activities are under his control, e.g., treasury, judiciary, police, army, navy, agriculture. See Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 395.

<sup>10</sup> The famine happened as Joseph had predicted (Gen 41:54) and he supplied the Egyptians with food from the stores he had laid up. Thus, his interpretation of the king's dreams was completely vindicated. See Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 398.

<sup>11</sup> According to Wenham, though Gen 47:21 ("As for the people, he made slaves of them . . .") sounds harsh, it was in this situation beneficial, for now the food supply of the people was the responsibility of the king of Egypt. In ancient society, slavery was the accepted way of bailing out the destitute and, under a benevolent master, could be quite a comfortable status. Indeed, the law envisages some temporary slaves electing to become permanent slaves rather than take the freedom to which they were entitled after six years of service. Ancient slavery at its best was like tenured employment, whereas the free person was more like someone who is self-employed. The latter may be freer, but she/he faces more risks (see Exod 21:5-6; Deut 15:12-17). See Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 449.

<sup>12</sup> Philip J. Budd has a different take on prostration. The prostration by Moses denotes at the very least an attitude of self-abasement or deference before one of higher rank. This makes it unlikely that the prostration is before the people. The prostration averts immediate wrath, holding up the flow of events, thereby giving Joshua and Caleb opportunity to argue their case. See Philip J. Budd, *Numbers*, Word Biblical Commentary, edited by David A. Hubbard, Glenn W. Barker, John D. W. Watts, and Ralph P. Martin, volume 5 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1984), 156.

<sup>13</sup> The laying on of hands here signifies the transference of leadership from Moses to Joshua. See Budd, *Numbers*, 307.

<sup>14</sup> Ralph W. Klein garners a feature of discipleship in David's conduct. David designates himself as obedient servant and volunteers for the fight; whereas the other soldiers have only passed on the word about the prizes to be won. See Ralph W. Klein, *1 Samuel*, Word Biblical Commentary, edited by David A. Hubbard, Glenn W. Barker, John D. W. Watts, and Ralph P. Martin, volume 10 (Waco, Texas: Word Books, Publisher, 1983), 179.

<sup>15</sup> Ralph W. Klein agrees that King Saul's fear led him to appoint David as commander of a thousand in order to get him out of sight. Apparently, King Saul hoped that David might fall in battle. See Klein, *1 Samuel*, 188.

<sup>16</sup> According to Simon J. DeVries, Elijah interprets Queen Jezebel's personal attack on him as the end of his ministry. See Simon J. DeVries, *1 Kings*, Word Biblical Commentary, edited by David A. Hubbard, Glenn W. Barker, John D. W. Watts, and Ralph P. Martin, volume 12 (Waco, Texas: Word Books, Publisher, 1985), 235.

<sup>7</sup> Simon J. DeVries expounds that the repeated complaint of Elijah in 1 Kgs 19:14 is an implicit confession that no strength for ministry remains in him and must, therefore, come from God. Elijah must reverse his retreat, returning to the land of ministry and there accomplishing mighty acts of prophetic power, anointing Hazael, Jehu, and Elisha. See DeVries, *1 Kings*, 236.

<sup>8</sup> In the opinion of Simon J. DeVries, Elisha has a request to make that is met with skepticism on Elijah's part. Elisha only wants time to kiss his father and mother farewell. Elijah's response suggests that Elisha may be vacillating and will use the moment at home to drop out or hide away. The question of Elijah is a challenge to Elisha. It is up to Elisha to decide whether or not he will belong to Elijah permanently. Elisha accepts the challenge. The text does not tell of his kissing his parents, but of slaughtering his oxen and chopping up their yoke in order to make a sacrificial feast, dedicating himself to the prophetic ministry. The fellow-villagers, who share the feast with Elisha, are witnesses to his ordination. See DeVries, *1 Kings*, 239.

<sup>9</sup> Simon J. DeVries interprets twelve yoke of oxen differently. Though the number twelve is symbolic of the tribes, it also suggests communal venture in which all the ox-teams from the village joined in cultivating a common field. See DeVries, *1 Kings* 239.

<sup>10</sup> T. R. Hobbs understands the persistence of Elisha as Elisha's attempt to see through to the end the journey he and his master have embarked upon. See T. R. Hobbs, *2 Kings*, Word Biblical Commentary, edited by David A. Hubbard, Glenn W. Barker, John D. W. Watts, and Ralph P. Martin, volume 13 (Waco, Texas: Word Books, Publisher, 1985), 20.

<sup>11</sup> According to T. R. Hobbs, Elisha is asking for the status as rightful heir to the prophetic leader's role. The phrase indicates twice as much as any other heir, not double the amount Elijah had. See Hobbs, *2 Kings*, 21.

<sup>12</sup> T. R. Hobbs opines that since Elisha is able to duplicate what Elijah had done, the true succession is confirmed. See Hobbs, *2 Kings*, 22.

# **Integrated Theological Formation**

## **Human/Personal, Intellectual, Spiritual and Pastoral**

**Philip Vysanethu**

“The ultimate goal of Christian theology is to learn about God, His nature, and His will, and how they apply to ourselves. Therefore, Christian theology also includes the study of man because God deals with man, saves him (Eph. 2:8), and loves him (John 3:16)” [A statement issued by U.S Catholic bishops-2001].

This paper deals with some thoughts on the four dimensions of human/personal, intellectual, spiritual and pastoral formation.

### **1.Human/Personal Formation**

In the oriental perspective a true human being is one who has an integrated personality. A religious or a priest should be naturally, a model of an integrated personality. The theological formation helps one to develop an integrated personality. Therefore theological formation is not merely an academic training but a way of life. Liturgy, in the orient, as the *locus theologicus*, reveals to an integrated formation. Theology is to be celebrated in the liturgy and this celebration demands a transformation in life. In other words the theology is to be celebrated in life.

The human/personal formation must lead one to the Dharma of Jesus, which is the major theological vision of Fr. George M. Soares - Prabhu, s.j. This formation is founded on the God-experience of Jesus. The God-experience of Jesus is founded on the unconditional love - He identified himself with sinful Israel (Mk 1:9-11). The God-experience of Jesus is the “Abba” experience (Mt 11:25; Mk 14:36; Jn 11:41) i.e. God as my/your father (Mt 5:45, 48; 6:1-9, 7:21; 10:32 etc.). Jesus’ fellowship is not limited to the churches which carry (and too often profane) his name. It reaches out to the many who will “come from east and west, and from north and south and sit at table in the kingdom of God” (Lk 13:29). [cf. George M. Soares-Prabhu, S.J, *Biblical Spirituality of Liberative Action*, JDV, Pune. 2003. p 3]

The freedom of Jesus is the model of personal formation.

God creates out of love. The incarnational theology is nothing but the love of God. His love surpasses the anger and punishment. I must love God because God has loved me- a compulsion that comes from within. 'Love of God' surpasses 'fear of God.' God is the one who loves without any discrimination of cast, sex or creed and religion. The God-experience of Jesus liberates him. For love experienced always leads to a freedom from inner conditioning, that is, from compulsions and fears that holds us in bondage. Are not such bondages, after all, always the result of an absence of love?" (cf. George M. Soares-Prabhu, S.J., *Biblical Spirituality of Liberative Action*, JDV, Pune. 2003. p 4).

George Soares Prabhu states:

Love leads to freedom (to personal freedom and ultimately to structural freedom) because it frees us from the constraints and fears, the doubts and compulsions that paralyse us. In a society that was politically colonized, socially patriarchal, and religiously conservative, he moved around with absolute freedom and authority (cf. Lk 9:58; Mk 10:45). The freedom of Jesus is all the more remarkable because he lacked position and power. He could claim no religious prestige; he was not a priest born into a priest family. He enjoyed no intellectual status: he was not a recognised theologian who was trained in a scribal school (Jn 7:15). He commanded no political power. He did not enjoy the privileges of wealth. Yet he taught with authority in word and deed (cf. Mk 1:27; Mt 7:28; Mk 11: 27-33; Mt 5:21, 27,31,33,38, Mt 5:021-48) [(cf. George M. Soares-Prabhu, S.J., *Biblical Spirituality of Liberative Action*, JDV, Pune. 2003. p 5].

This vision should mould our religious/ priest students to persons with inner freedom and responsibility. This responsibility always seeks the good of a person and of the community. Though formation based on inner freedom and responsibility is a risk it allows one to experience the thrill of taking a reasonable risk and a challenge in life. From inner freedom, spring up spontaneity and creativity. Such a formation stresses quality rather than quantity. Here there will not be any tension between the formator and the formee. The whole community is in the queue of formation. One who stands ahead is the one who came earlier.



One who came earlier is more experienced than the others. His function is that of a guide not of a dictator.

In short one can say that theological formation must be oriented towards personal formation which would equip one to fight against injustice and other evils in the society. This is nothing but the prophetic call of a religious/priest.

## 2. Intellectual Formation

Vat.II in the Decree of formation of priests instructs that the intellectual formation of the candidates should not tip the balance between mystery and reasoning:

In the revision of ecclesiastical studies the main object to be kept in mind is a more effective coordination of philosophy and theology so that they supplement one another in revealing the minds of the students with ever increasing clarity the mystery of Christ which affects the whole course of human history, exercises and unceasing influence on the Church, and operates mainly through the ministry of the priest... This vision should be communicated to the students from the very first moment of their training: their ecclesiastical studies therefore, should begin with an introductory course of appropriate duration. In this course the mystery of salvation should be presented in such a way that the students may understand the meaning, arrangement and pastoral aim of ecclesial studies, and may be helped at the same time to make faith the foundation and inner principle of their entire personal lives, and be strengthened in their resolve to accept their vocation with joyful heart and complete personal dedication... The students themselves should be helped to perceive the connection between philosophical arguments and the mysteries of salvation which theology considers in the higher light of faith (*optatam totius 14*)).

Combining faith/mystery and reasoning is always a problem in the intellectual formation. The words of Timothy T. O'Donnell\*, is very relevant in this juncture: (God) He reveals the depth of His infinite

---

\* Timothy T. O'Donnell is the current president of Christendom College, located in Front Royal, Virginia. He is a well known Catholic theologian who holds a Doctorate in Sacred Theology at the Pontifical University of Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Angelicum* in Rome, Italy, in 1981 with a dissertation entitled *A study in the*

love for each individual man, yes, even for theologians. Man's response in faith must be a grateful acceptance and a humble opening up to the divine initiative and a confident abandonment to the antecedent power of God's love. It is through faith that man is enlightened and attracted by God. St. Thomas states that as long as man is in the state of being a wayfarer, he is capable of reaching a certain understanding of the supernatural mysteries through the use of his reason but only to the extent to which the latter rests upon faith. We live in an age where it has become necessary to restate the obvious... This faith is the very key to understanding, as St. Augustine said, "By believing, you become capable of understanding. If you do not believe you will never succeed in understanding. Let faith, therefore, purify you so that you may be granted the privilege of reaching full understanding." It almost appears that there is a denial today that the faith is related to the truth. Many teach and act as if the faith is not true.

If we look at the great theologians of the Church, we find two recurring elements which have characterized their approach to the teaching of theology. The Church's greatest minds have always been her greatest saints who reveal to us that theology must be approached with two key elements. First, a deep and a profound sense of gratitude. Secondly, united to this gratitude must be a sincere humility. Let us stop and reflect on this: our intellects are so limited. This life is so short, it passes away so quickly. We are called to hear the words of the great St. Augustine, "I have undertaken the task of dealing with divine things. I who am a mere man with spiritual things. I who have a being of flesh with eternal things. I who am mortal!" What a profound sense of reverence, awe, gratitude and humility we find in the great doctor of grace. This is the attitude which the theologian must bring to his teaching and writing.

He also gives a warning of falling into fideism. Today, we can observe the waves of fideism in many of the young priests/religious which often take the people to non enthusiasm and a lethargic mentality.

In the words of Timothy T. O'Donnell,

Now there have been two extremes throughout the history of theology, and at the present time, these continue. On the one

---

*relationship between doctrine and spirituality : the contemporary and perennial value of devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.* He is the first layman to receive a licentiate and doctorate in Ascetical and Mystical Theology from the *Angelicum*.

hand, due to certain crises in the Church's history, there has been a distrust of reason which has led to fideism. On the other hand, we have an excessively rationalistic approach, what we would call secularized theology, which does not allow for the dimension of supernatural mystery, and at times even of truth. This latter tendency toward a secularized theology is the far more common tendency today. As a result, theology has been divorced from the life of grace. It has been divorced from spirituality. This is an extremely dangerous situation. We have seen it before in the decadent scholastic philosophy and theology of the 15th century when theologians and mystics stopped talking to one another. It's dangerous because all authentic Catholic spirituality must be deeply grounded in doctrine. As the great theologian, Garrigou-Lagrange stated, "Ascetical and mystical theology is the summit and the crown of all theology."

St. Pope John Paul once said to the theologians: "A true theological commitment, let us say so frankly, can neither begin nor conclude except on one's knees, at least in the secrecy of one's interior self where it is possible to worship the Father in spirit and in truth." In the teaching of theology we must be men and women of prayer, men and women of humility, men and women of gratitude. We must try to maintain the sense of mystery."

What we can conclude from above is our intellectual formation should be a synchronisation of both faith and reasoning.

### **3. Spiritual formation**

Whether in the orient or in the occident theology and spirituality is weaved together like a colourful/beautiful piece of cloth. The moment when we separate the one from the other the whole system of formation becomes weak. The theology is to be celebrated in Liturgy and life. In the liturgy we celebrate the flesh-becoming Logos, the flesh-becoming love of God. We proclaim the immanence of God's love who is 'Immanuel' - *God is with us*; on the other hand we accept our limitedness to comprehend God in our faculty of knowing. Hence we proclaim and call Him '*Our Father in Heaven*'. Thus the liturgical celebration becomes the celebration of the mystery of His love. The whole life of a religious/priest should be bound to the celebration of the Mysteries so that there must not be any dichotomy between his/her liturgical

proclamation and his life outside of the celebration. One must radiate the 'Light' that he/she received in the liturgy to his fellow being firstly in his community and then outside of his community—a cosmic responsibility. One must be able to impart both the *immanent* and the *transcendental* nature of his/her experience of God. The academic theology one studies has relevance only when he/she can relate it with the reality outside. Finally one must be ready to accept that the same God one confronts in the liturgy is *beyond* all the liturgies, sacraments and our speculations.

Assuring his prayers to seminarians from the Middle East and Ukraine, Pope Francis responded to an American seminarian's question by stating that spiritual formation, academic life, community life, and apostolic formation are the four pillars of the seminary. Academic study without the other three components, he said, leads to the danger of "slipping into ideology." It is worth mentioning to refer *U.K Telegraph* on Pope Francis: "Francis is a Jesuit and his long, arduous formation as a priest was founded on the spiritual exercises of St Ignatius... To think that the leader of the Catholic Church is one who follows in the tradition of Ignatius, whose life has been devoted to finding God in all things."

#### 4. Pastoral Formation

Pastoral formation is the convergence of personal, intellectual and spiritual formation. One who is formed in the above three realms will be able to impart his or her service in the pastoral field.

Pope Francis called on the world's priests to bring the healing power of God's grace to everyone in need, to stay close to the marginalized and to be "shepherds living with the smell of the sheep."

On March 28, during the chrism Mass in St. Peter's Basilica He said:

"Who do not go out of themselves" by being mediators between God and men can "gradually become intermediaries, managers." When a priest "doesn't put his own skin and own heart on the line, he never hears a warm, heartfelt word of thanks" from those he has helped... "This is precisely the reason why some priests grow dissatisfied, lose heart and become in a sense collectors of antiquities or novelties — instead of being shepherds living with 'the smell of the sheep...'"



Surrounded by more than 1,600 priests, bishops and cardinals, Pope Francis led them in a renewal in their priestly promises. He focused his homily on the meaning of being 'the anointed ones' through ordination, underlining Holy Thursday as the day Jesus shared his priesthood with the apostles... "God anointed his servants so they would be there for others, serving the poor, prisoners, the sick, for those who are sorrowing and alone..."

In his words:

The precious sacramental oil is not intended just to make us fragrant, much less to be kept in a jar, for then it would become rancid and the heart bitter... a good priest anoints his people 'with the oil of gladness,' by preaching the Gospel 'with unction,' that is with the soothing, comforting words of God... If people leave Mass looking as if they have heard good news then the priest has clearly done his job well... When we have this relationship with God and with his people, and his grace passes through us, then we are priests, mediators between God and men...

The pope urged priests not to grow weary of people's requests and needs no matter how 'inconvenient ... purely material or downright banal,' such appeals may seem. He says:

Priests need to look deeper at what's driving the encounter: the person's underlying hope and desire for divine comfort, for being anointed with fragrant oil, since they know we have it... We need to 'go out,' then, in order to experience our own anointing, its power and its redemptive efficacy: to the 'outskirts where there is suffering, bloodshed, blindness that longs for sight and prisoners in thrall to many evil masters... The power of grace comes alive and flourishes to the extent that we, in faith, go out and give ourselves and the Gospel to others, giving what little ointment we have to those who have nothing, nothing at all...

The pope ended his homily by asking the faithful to "be close to your priests with affection and with your prayers, that they may always be shepherds according to God's heart."

The pastoral dimension of a *priest as pastor* is beautifully portrayed in the Liturgy of Priesthood according to Syro-Malankara Rite. He is not called to confine himself in the meticulousness of a cultic priesthood

out to reach out to the endless horizon of the pastures of Yahweh, the shepherd (Cf. Ps 23). Let me show a few examples:

a. Total dedication to the service of the People of God

In the *Omologia* or the admonition to the candidate (Cf. *Omologia* 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph) it is said: "... as the member of the House (Church) those who do not dedicate themselves to service are not fit for priesthood..." Then this *Omologia* expands itself to the dignity and praxis of this great service of God and the people of God. A priest must be a person with Divine Wisdom. He must be able to translate this wisdom in the 'language' of the people of God to whom he is expected to render his service. In other words the philosophy and theology he learned during his long formation must not remain in him as speculative philosophy and theology but practical philosophy and theology.

b. One who prays both for himself and for the people of God

In the last paragraph of the *Omologia* the candidate for priesthood is instructed to pray for himself and for the people whom he is expected to render his service. He must be a person empowered by fasting and penance. Above all he must have a serene personality so that he must be able to impart this serenity to whomever he comes in contact with. Again in the *Omologia* it is said: "You must be enthusiastic and vigilant to pray for yourself and the people of God whom you are serving. You should be armoured with fast and prayer which are the undefeatable weapons." This clearly shows that a priest should be a 'man of God' but not at all a 'god-man'. He should be a person filled with humility and simplicity and he is not to be served but to serve the people of God. He must always hold to his heart the people who are entrusted to him.

c. One who is the custodian of Holy mysteries

In the second paragraph of the *Sedro* and in the first *Qolo* of the second hymn the candidate for priesthood is addressed as a spiritual offering to God. He should be a custodian of the Holy Mysteries, a wise man, a good administrator and above all a guardian of Souls. He must be a priest with moral reputation, a counsellor of virtues for his spiritual sheep and a door keeper of the Heaven (to open the door so that the people of God may enter through it). He must be vigilant against all the evil that could take away his flock astray. He must

admonish the one who is not upright but at the same time he must be kind enough to bring back a penitent to God. He must be a shepherd who runs after his lost sheep. He must be firm in Love, adorned in hope and a man of punctuality. He must lead his spiritual flock to the Eternal Pastures. He must be humble and meek.

d. A torch lighted from the light of Christ

Covering the candidate with priestly vestment the celebrant makes a prayer. Here it is beautifully expressed that the priest should be a torch lighted from the light of Christ who is the eternal light. The vocation of a priest is to help the people to walk in the light of Jesus, the eternal light, for that he should be an enlightened person.

e. One who is constantly strengthened by the prayer of the people of God

At beginning of the Holy Mass the celebrant says: "Pray brethren that I may be counted worthy to celebrate this Holy and life giving sacrifice for the whole Church." The worthiness of the priest is not merely his academic qualities or other merits but the merit of the praying community. An example can be taken from OT (Cf. Ex.17:11ff- Aaron and Hur holding the hand of Moses). It shows the inseparable relation between the pastor and the flock, a sort of ontological existence. This rich ecclesial experience celebrated in the Liturgy is nothing but the pastoral theology of the Malankara Church.

## Conclusion

In the integral theological formation personal/human, intellectual, spiritual and pastoral dimensions must be given equal importance. Our theological formation should focus on human maturity based on inner freedom and wisdom rooted in the 'Abba experience' (cf. G. M. Soares-Prabhu, S.J., *Biblical Spirituality of Liberative Action*, JDV, Pune-411 014. P 45) of Jesus who is our Lord, *Mahatguru* and Shepherd. Let our theological formation be the mould for integrated persons who are the keepers of our brothers, sisters and the cosmos (cf. Gen 4:9).

# Integral Theological Formation for Apostolate of Tomorrow in the Light of Vatican II

Selva Rathinam

## Introduction

When we become aware of the attitude of the most of the students in priestly formation with regard to the study of Philosophy and Theology we wonder how much of positive effect they had made upon them! The majority opinion of the students is that they are “outdated, impractical, abstract, irrelevant, elitist, superfluous and even dangerous to faith and sanity.”<sup>1</sup> My task in this essay is to prove that why these studies are crucial to priestly formation. When I joined for Philosophy one of my professors asked us, the students, in the class, “What is it in human in front of which even God Almighty is helpless?” This is the freedom of human beings! Philosophy means ‘love of wisdom’ and wisdom here is knowledge but not of any knowledge but of knowledge of ultimate causes and values. It is to have a larger picture of life. Philosophy and theology raise the mind’s eyes to The Big Picture. If we can’t see that, we miss the forest and see only the trees; we count the syllables in the book of life but don’t know what kind of a story we are in.”<sup>2</sup> It is about the mystery of God, human and world. Here one examines the reasonable answers given by philosophers in order to gain wisdom. Theology tries to understand faith enshrined in our scripture and Tradition in today’s time, space and context. We are well aware of the general principles given by the Church for the holistic formation: *Ratiofundamentalis institutionis Sacerdotali, Optatam totius, Presbyterorum Ordinis, Perfectae Caritatis, Directives on the formation of Religious Institution, Pastores Dabo Vobis* etc., We need to apply them to our formation with local color.



The Catholic priestly formation has “philosophy departments that are excellent spiritually as well as academically, but have deeply compromised theology departments. Their effect on students is much more often to weaken their faith than to strengthen it, not only in controversial moral issues such as abortion, contraception, cloning, euthanasia and sexual morality, but even in fundamental doctrines such as Christ’s divinity and resurrection and the historical truth of the Gospels. We badly need good philosophy and theology.”<sup>3</sup>

### **1. Good Philosophy, Good Theology, a Pre-(Second) Vatican View**

There have been people who read the famous “allegory of cave” from Plato’s *Republic* and got transformed, found their identity and found their way to come out of the cave of their own life to discover another bigger world outside the cave, the world of ideas.<sup>4</sup> The ideal world is another kind of reality than the material world. “Ideas have consequences. The only alternative to good philosophy is bad philosophy. ‘I hate philosophy’ is bad philosophy, but it is a philosophy.”<sup>5</sup> Peter Kreeft says the following things to prove the importance of Philosophy and Theology and since they are most convincing I give his argument in full here: “Everyone has a philosophy, just as everyone has an emotional temperament and a moral character. Your only choice is between “knowing yourself” and thinking about your philosophy, or hiding from it and from yourself. But what you do not think about will still be there, and will still motivate you, and have consequences, and those consequences will affect all the people in your life up to the day of your death and far beyond it. Your philosophy can quite likely and quite literally make the difference between heaven and hell. Saint Francis of Assisi and Adolf Hitler were not professional philosophers, but both had philosophies, and lived them, and went to heaven or hell according to their philosophies...Philosophy can lead you to God, and theology can lead you further into God (or away from Him). And God is the source of all truth, all goodness and all beauty; that is, of everything we value...All goodness is God’s goodness; when an agnostic secularist loves his neighbor, he is responding to divine grace. All beauty is God’s beauty; when a dissipated, confused and immoral artist creates a thing of beauty, he is using the image of God in his soul, being inspired by the Holy Spirit, however anonymously, and participating in God’s creative power...Philosophy is a necessity if you want to understand our world. Bad philosophy is the source of most of the great errors in our world today. Errors in philosophy are devastating because they affect

everything, as an error of an inch in surveying the angle of a property line will become an error of ten yards a mile down the line. Most of the controversies in our world today can be understood and solved only by good philosophy and theology; for instance, the relation between world religions, especially Islam and Christianity; human life issues such as abortion, euthanasia and cloning; the justice of wars; the meaning of human sexuality and of the "sexual revolution"; the relation between mind and brain, and between human intelligence and "artificial intelligence"; the relation between creation and evolution; how far we are free and responsible and how far we are determined by biological heredity and social environment; the relation between morality and religion, and between religion and politics; and whether morality is socially relative or universal, unchanging and absolute. Revealed theology claims to have the answers, or at least the principles that should govern the answers, to many of these questions. So theology is even more important than philosophy, if answers are more important than questions. And of course they are, for the whole point of asking a question, if you are honest, is the hope of finding an answer. It is nonsense to believe that "it is better to travel hopefully than to arrive," and good philosophy refutes that self-contradiction."<sup>6</sup>

Although the above words of Peter Kreeft sound very convincing it appears to me one sided and Pre-Vatican. The impression created here is that Ideas can change us. Is it the whole truth? It is not idea but experience that can bring about a change. According to Vatican I we have an access to knowledge by two means: reason and revelation. Reason gives you a natural knowledge (perhaps, here comes Philosophy) and revelation gives you a supernatural knowledge (perhaps, here comes Theology). Supernatural knowledge is superior knowledge because here what has been hidden is revealed by God and thus Bible, for example, contains supernatural truths! This one sided view brought intolerance in some circles and sacrificed love at the altar of truth! This was corrected by Vatican II when it understood revelation in the context of relational experience. Here revelation is the self disclosure of God and *dabar Yahweh* (the word of the Lord) is not only informative as in Vatican I but also affective and performative! Thus, even Philosophy should begin with experience.

## **2. Towards Vatican II and Priestly Training:**

### **Reform of the Clergy at the Trent**

The historians and theologians of the Roman Catholic Church found

it of great interest the relationship between the Trent and the Second Vatican Council although they are separated by four centuries and occurred at different situations. The similarity and the differences of the formation of priestly leadership in both Councils can throw greater light on this topic. In this and the next section I follow the reflection of Kenan B. Osborne on "Priestly Formation" in the book titled *From Trent to Vatican II: Historical and Theological Investigation* and the page numbers within the bracket here refer back to this book.<sup>7</sup>

One of the major goals of the Council of Trent convoked by Pope Paul III in 1545 was the "reform" of the Clergy (p. 118). In this Council the Bishops mandated two particular issues on priestly formation: only competent Scripture scholars should train seminarians and second, preaching the Word of God was a major task of bishops and priests, and such preaching should be done regularly on all Sundays and solemn festivals. Further the Council said that the *cura animarum* in a diocese is a matter of highest priority. They should have a solid spiritual and ethical life. Illiterate and incompetent seminarians should not be ordained. The term used by the Council for priestly formation is 'reform,' where as the Second Vatican Council has been described as a Council of 'renewal.'

Before Trent there was not a proper "seminary system" in Europe. Most of the priestly candidates did not have any seminary training. Even during the session of the Trent a large number of priests and even bishops lived openly in concubinage (p. 121). Just prior to the Council of Trent there was an overgrowth of priests, "but a large number of them were morally deficient, intellectually unqualified, or professionally incompetent" (p. 121). The cause of this overgrowth was primarily the benefice system of power, prestige and wealth. The Tridentine bishops had great concern for the formation of priests.

If the diocesan clergy was in shambles, religious clergy were not significantly better off. "In some monastic communities prior to Trent, a two track system existed regarding ordination" (p. 121). Although religious postulants for ordination, in contrast to diocesan priests, were required to undergo a lengthy period of spiritual formation, many who lacked intellectual and theological training, too, were ordained as priests. Such priests had enough training to read Latin and to celebrate Mass but had no training for preaching and other ministerial or pastoral duties (p. 121). As a result, they could not exercise the *cura animarum*. Yet, many were ordained because the celebrating of Masses engendered



financial stipends and the historical data indicate that the custom of daily Masses arose for such purposes in monastic communities and 'they were simply 'Mass priests'' (pp. 121-122). Thus, there were too many priests both religious and diocesan! To add to this, bishops and abbots were used to be absent from their residences for long periods of time. Since they were in charge of wealth they lived in luxury and in some form of concubinage. Thus, although there were many reform movements in the spiritual life of the Church beginning from 1000 there was no theological reform in the Church which was challenged by Luther, Calvin and Zwingli who presented a reform theology. "Complicating the entire period from 1000 to 1550 was theancorous battle between the *imperium* and the *sacerdotium*.... [Even] the pope [Paul III] was filled with anxiety lest his authority would be hampered with at Trent" (p. 123). Thus, St. Ignatius of Loyola seemed to have mentioned at this time that reform is needed toward both head and members. Paul III was strong enough to convoke a council but not strong enough to bring about structural change or reform in the Roman curia. His intolerance towards narrowing of the papal authority, even in small matters, such as granting of indulgences prevented the substantial reform of the papacy and the papal curia (pp. 123-124). 'In other words, structural reform of the Church has been, and remains, significantly blocked by the deliberate refusal to allow internal changes in the structure of the curia. This failure to reform the curia at Trent, at Vatican II, and since Vatican II remains an important obstacle to the renewal of priestly formation" (p. 124).

"In the twentieth century before Vatican II, the ideal diocesan priest was "rectory priest" or a "sacristan priest." His contact with the laity was official rather than casual. The apostolate was Church-centered, not society centered. The horarium of a priest's day was governed by the Eucharist and prayer, in particular the breviary" (125). Thus, just prior to Vatican II the ideal image of the diocesan priest was both an educated and a spiritual person (p. 126).<sup>8</sup> To have such a priest in a family naturally brought honor to a family (p. 126). The Second Vatican Council was not convened to reform the clergy and therefore the formation of seminarians was not gone deeper than the Trent.

### **3. Priestly Formation at Vatican II and Beyond**

When we move from Trent to the Second Vatican Council what we see is that the issue of priests and priestly formation was not in the original agenda of the Vatican II. But eventually as an afterthought the



Vatican Council took up this issue and produced two major conciliar documents: the Decree on the Training of Priests, *Optatam Totius*, and the Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, *Presbyterorum Ordinis*. These two documents should be read through the lens of two other documents of Vatican II, the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, and the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*.

### 3.1 Priest as the Lunar Identity of Jesus

The basic ecclesiology (LG) of Vatican II has affected the theology of the priesthood. First, the conciliar bishops deliberately linked ecclesiology to Christology. The bishops chose the title *Lumen Gentium* to indicate that Jesus alone is the Light of the World and not the Church. Bonaventure Kloppenburg one of the *periti* at the council compared the relationship between Jesus and the Church to the Sun and the moon (p. 127). As the moon derives its light from the Sun, so the Church from Christ and therefore the Church fulfills its identity only when it reflects Jesus. Similarly, a priest is a priest only when he reflects Jesus. "The formation of seminarians is a formation into a lunar reflection of the one Light of the World, Jesus. When this ceases to be the major guiding principle in seminary training, the training itself has ceased to be of value" (p. 128).

### 3.2 The Unlivability of the Ministerial Priesthood apart from the Common Priesthood

In the Vatican Council there was a strong debate with regard to which topic should form the second chapter of LG: the hierarchy or the people of God.<sup>9</sup> The preference to the priesthood of all believers in Chapter 2 shows that the ordained priesthood cannot be understood apart from the priesthood of all believers (*Sacerdotes Generales*). However, there is also a passage in LG 10 which states that an essential difference exists between the two priesthoods. What is this 'essential' is nowhere explained. In fact, the later revised Code of Canon Law simply states that there are a priesthood of all believers and an ordained priesthood. Since both are interrelated "the formations of seminarians must include an identity of ordained priesthood in relationship to their own identity as part of the priesthood of all believers" (p. 129). This means as the Archbishop of Rheims, Francois Marty put it in the Council that "the scholastic definition of priesthood, which is based on the power to consecrate the Eucharist," was no longer the operational theology of the priest but "must be looked at... as embracing not one function

but three,” namely the *tria munera*: prophet, priest, and king (p. 129).<sup>10</sup> In the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* it refers to the teaching office (888) (namely, to preach the Gospel of God), the sanctifying office (893) (visible in the prayer, work of the priests, in the ministry of the Word and in sacramental celebration and especially in the Eucharist), and the governing office (894) where the Good Shepherd is presented as the model of this pastoral dimension of the *tria munera*.

The documents of Vatican II rethought of priestly ministry in a triadic fashion, especially in a Gospel centered priesthood but at the same time retained the traditional hierarchical elements that had dominated Trent and this creates a major problem (p. 130).

### 3.3 Word of God a major source of Priestly Spirituality

Since the documents from Rome on priestly ministry repeatedly give the primacy to the preaching of the Word, the competent professors of biblical studies and of homiletics must help the seminarians to have a very solid training in the biblical Word of God (p. 130). This shows that the word of God should become a major source of their spiritual life and in this sense, “Catholic clergy are called on to be more Protestant”<sup>11</sup> (p. 130).

For the Roman Catholic clergy, the stress in the past was on sacramental nourishment, especially the sacraments of the Eucharist and reconciliation. Today since Vatican II, the Word of God has begun-but in practice only just begun- to be a major source of priestly spirituality. If the preaching of the Word of God is the primary test of a priest, then the Word of God must enter into the life of a priest – and by implication of seminarian – not only intellectually but spiritually as well (p. 130).

### 3.4 Mission oriented Priestly Spirituality

The spirituality of a diocesan priest is described in terms of poverty, chastity, and obedience (*Optatam totius*, 9 and 10; *Presbyterorum ordinis*, 15-17). This approach to priestly spirituality which has its origin in monastic life and religious life antedates Vatican II and tried over several centuries to make diocesan priests into “mini-monks” (p. 130). Although the 1990 synodal working document *Formation of Priests in Circumstances of the Present Day* presents a priestly spirituality that is basically personal, ethical, and private, in number 14 it clearly states that all priests are called to mission, namely, “to announce the gospel of God to all.” The implication is that the priestly spirituality is pastoral and the “priests who are too timid to leave either the monastery

or the rectory are by no means the priests that today's world needs," (p. 132) and seminarians should be formed in this way.

### **3.5 Collegiality an essential part of a *Presbyterium***

Finally Collegiality, according to Vatican II, is part of the theology of Priesthood. This refers to interrelationship and interdependence of priestly ministry. "The priest is an essential part of a *presbyterium* and the bishop also is an essential part" (p. 132). "Whenever the *presbyterium* of a diocese meets together or has a convocation, the bishop should be there during the entire time" (p. 132).<sup>12</sup> Similarly the ministerial priesthood (priest/bishop) must be in collegial union with the priesthood of all believers.

## **4. Integral Formation**

As described in *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (PDV) the formation for the Priesthood is characterized by four pillars – human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral.

### **4.1 Human**

For PDV the human formation is the 'necessary foundation' of the formation process of a candidate for priestly ministry. The human formation looks at Jesus the Word incarnate to understand what it means to be fully human. Here the formation program should assist the candidate on his journey of self-awareness (and acceptance) and maturity (relational, affective and psychosexual) and ministerial (identity and boundaries).<sup>13</sup> This requires a priest psychologist/psychotherapist who offers the human formation workshops. One of the fundamental goals of the human formation program is to assist the candidate to become a healthy celibate priest who overcomes different forms of selfishness and individualism and opens himself to the service of others (*Pastores Dabo Vobis*, 43).

### **4.2 Intellectual**

"The intellectual formation of candidates for the priesthood finds its specific justification in the very nature of the ordained ministry, and the challenge of the "new evangelization" to which our Lord is calling the Church on the threshold of the third millennium shows just how important this formation is" (*Pastores Dabo Vobis*, 51). In our Pontifical Atheneum the students are engaged in philosophical and theological programs of study. In the first cycle (Bachelor of Philosophy and Theology) they are exposed to the systematic overview of the major areas of philosophy and theology. The courses are presented almost though not exclusively in a lecture format with required participation



of the theology students in a seminar, contextual theology project and Bachelor of theology essay. The grading system is based on a scale of 100 marks with the highest grade, for the languages, for example, being 100 and grades below 40 (60) marks representing a failure. The student must maintain an overall average of 50 (80) marks to qualify for graduate study of the Master's and doctoral levels. All the required courses are taught in English although some optional are open to be taught in regional languages. The fourth year of the Bachelor of theology is dedicated exclusively to Pastoral Formation which consists of courses of Pastoral in nature. This is followed by integration of theological studies through comprehensive board exam or defense paper. Finally live in parish experience as deacons leads to the ordination to priesthood. Thus, intellectual formation is not a mere theoretical or speculative knowledge.

To be pastorally effective, intellectual formation is to be integrated with a spirituality marked by a personal experience of God. In this way a purely abstract approach to knowledge is overcome in favor of that intelligence of heart which knows how 'to look beyond,' and then is in a position to communicate the mystery of God to the people. (*Pastores Dabo Vobis*, 51).

### 4.3 Pastoral

*Pastores Dabo Vobis*, 57 says that pastoral formation is the place of integration in priestly formation. Here the seminarian integrates the human, intellectual, and spiritual formation with the practical work of ministry as he preaches, celebrates the Sacraments, and serves with charity.<sup>14</sup> "The Word, the Sacraments, and Service of Charity – these three provide the framework for the pastoral formation program."<sup>15</sup>

According to the Second Vatican Council the "first task of priests is to preach the Gospels" (*Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 4). Few years back when the theology students of JDV interviewed the many parishners in and around Pune for their Contextual Theology Project with regard to their expectation of the priests, the parishners responded saying that they want priests who are good preachers. JDV gives a good training and a video evaluation of the student performance in the course on Homiletics. The fourth year deacons preach several homilies during the year in their respective religious communities and in the nearby parish Churches. Since the authentic preaching is the outcome of an authentic life the students are challenged to lead the interior life of holiness for their exterior life of ministry.



The Second Vatican Council teaches that “the liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed... and the fount from which all her power flows” (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 10). This requires the sacramental and liturgical formation of our students. The emphasis in the first three years of theology in this line is the study of the ‘theology’ of the sacraments. In the fourth year a weeklong workshop is given on the priest as preside at liturgies. During the year the students also receive instruction in the rituals for each of the sacraments and through a series of role plays they learn to obtain their ministerial training.

It is St. Augustine who said that the priest is a “man for others.”<sup>16</sup> The weekly apostolic service organized by the individual religious communities here encourages the students to proclaim the gospel by deeds of Charity. Every week for two or three hours every seminarian participates in various apostolic works throughout the year. Since Pune is the metropolitan city our seminarians get enough opportunity to serve the people belonging to different language backgrounds. Seminarians visit the slums, the hospitals, the prisons, the children of the HIV/AIDS parents, the construction workers and their children. They teach religious education in the schools and the parishes and conduct tuition classes on the JDV premises. They animate the basic small Christian communities and youth groups in the parishes. They prepare the people for liturgies and give choir practices. Such ‘hands on’ experience exposes the seminarians to the struggles of ordinary people and they learn to relate their studies to the issues of the people in day to day life. In all their apostolic ministries the preferential option for the poor and seeking Christ in them are emphasized.

In addition to the above pastoral formation program during the academic year the seminarians also participate in the apostolic work during summer from the end of March through early June in their respective dioceses and provinces in different parts of the country. During the semester holidays or summer they also travel to various parts of the country to gain familiarity with other cultures and religions. During the academic year or summer they also study at least one more regional and foreign language. Such experiences broaden one’s perception of the world.

“It is essential for the priest to know how to reflect on his experience and see how God is at work throughout every moment of his life and in the lives of the people he serves.”<sup>17</sup> To develop the capacity for this,

the seminarians are led in exercises of theological reflection. At different times during the year the seminarians meet in small groups to reflect on their apostolic service and the formators in each religious community or faculty members facilitate such theological reflections. It is such a formation which would make us participate in the triple function of Jesus Christ. Vatican II stresses that,

“the whole training of the students should have as its object to make them true shepherds of souls after the example of our Lord Jesus Christ, teacher, priest and shepherd.” (*Optatam Totius*, 4). The aim of the seminary pastoral formation is “to initiate the candidate into the sensitivity of being a shepherd, in the conscious and mature assumption of his responsibilities, in the interior habit of evaluating problems and establishing priorities and looking for solutions on the basis of honest motivations of faith and according to the theological demands inherent in pastoral work.” (*Pastores Dabo Vobis*, 58).

#### 4.4 Spiritual

In Pune the JDV students stay in different religious communities in and around its large campus. Daily Mass and evening prayer form the basis of each of these communities. In addition each student spends an hour of meditation and fifteen minutes of Examination of Conscience a day. Each student has chosen a spiritual director in or out of the community. While a house spiritual directors are always available, the students meet the spiritual director at least once a month. Though seminarians may celebrate their Sacrament of Penance with their Spiritual directors or any other priest, communal penance services are organized for each Advent, Lent and the feast of the founder saints. In addition, monthly recollections, seasonal conferences and annual retreats provided by the respective communities equip the students with skills for spiritual development.

In every community the spiritual directors oversee the spiritual formation in accordance with the Second Vatican Council's *Optatam Totius*, decree on Priestly Training, so that, the students,

“learn to live in an intimate and unceasing union with the Father through His Son Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit” (*Optatam Totius*, 8). “Spiritual formation...should be conducted in such a way that the students may learn to live in intimate and unceasing union with God the Father through his Son Jesus Christ, in the Holy Spirit. Those who are to take on the likeness of



Christ by sacred ordination should form the habit of drawing close to him as friends in every detail of their lives. They should live his Paschal mystery in such a way that they will know how to initiate into it the people committed to their charge. They should be taught to seek Christ in faithful meditation on the word of God and in active participation in the sacred mysteries of the Church, especially the Eucharist and the Divine Office, to seek him in the Bishop by whom they are sent and in the people to whom they are sent, especially the poor, little children, the weak, sinners and unbelievers. With the confidence of sons they should love and reverence the most Blessed Virgin Mary, who was given as a mother to the disciple by Jesus Christ as he was dying on the Cross" (Optatam Totius, 8).

## End Notes

<sup>1</sup> Peter Kreeft, "Why study Philosophy and Theology?" in <http://www.catholiceducation.org/articles/education/ed0392.htm> accessed on 31/1/2014.

<sup>2</sup> Peter Kreeft, "Why study Philosophy and Theology?"

<sup>3</sup> Peter Kreeft, "Why study Philosophy and Theology?"

<sup>4</sup> Peter Kreeft, "Why study Philosophy and Theology?"

<sup>5</sup> Peter Kreeft, "Why study Philosophy and Theology?"

<sup>6</sup> Peter Kreeft, "Why study Philosophy and Theology?"

<sup>7</sup> Kenan B. Osborne, "Priestly Formation", in: Raymond F. Bulman and Frederick J. Parella (eds.), *From Trent to Vatican II: Historical and Theological Investigations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

<sup>8</sup> This image of a priest goes back to the training of a priest in a Sulpician or Vincentian way from 1700 onward where Olier and Vincent de Paul injected a strong spiritual tenor into the Tridentine mandate on priestly formation.

<sup>9</sup> There are three phrases used in the Council for the common matrix of all Christians: "the people of God," "believers of Christ" (*Christifideles*), and "the priesthood of all believers" (*Sacerdotes Generales*).

<sup>10</sup> The *tria munera* understanding of the priest became an essential part of the revised Code of Canon Law and also used in the late writings of Paul VI and of John Paul II.

<sup>11</sup> Since the Reformation, the Word of God has been the major source of spiritual life for the Protestant clergy, often more so than sacraments.

<sup>12</sup> The bishops themselves form a collegiums as they cannot be seen in isolation with each other.

<sup>13</sup> See [www.pnac.org/the-seminary/formation-program/human/](http://www.pnac.org/the-seminary/formation-program/human/) accessed on 2/7/14.

<sup>14</sup> See [www.pnac.org/the-seminary/formation-program/pastoral/](http://www.pnac.org/the-seminary/formation-program/pastoral/) accessed on 2/7/14.

<sup>15</sup> [www.pnac.org/the-seminary/formation-program/pastoral/](http://www.pnac.org/the-seminary/formation-program/pastoral/)

<sup>16</sup> [www.pnac.org/the-seminary/formation-program/pastoral/](http://www.pnac.org/the-seminary/formation-program/pastoral/)

<sup>17</sup> [www.pnac.org/the-seminary/formation-program/pastoral/](http://www.pnac.org/the-seminary/formation-program/pastoral/)